

**23**  
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**YOUR OFFICIAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS MAGAZINE**

# DRAGON

## GNOMES

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**Fiction by Neal Barrett, Jr.**

**Castle Building on your computer**

ISSUE 291

JANUARY 2002







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Greg Staples's interpretation of Nebin, the iconic gnome illusionist, emphasizes that gnomes, perhaps more than any other PC race, have changed.

STAPLES '01



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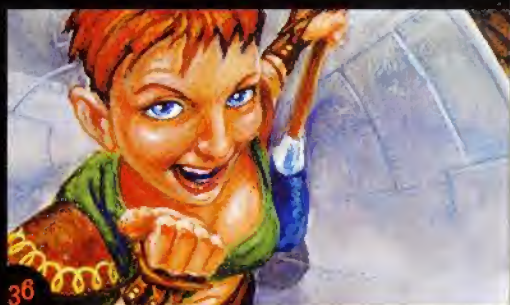
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## Writing Your Lines

Talking in character is a big deal. DMs dig it, other players often admire it, and you'll get a lot of mileage out of stories recounting it (even if your friends groan every time you bring it up).

The only problem with talking in character is that keeping consistent dialog running isn't easy. Let's face it, if we were world-class improvisational actors, we'd be on stage somewhere. Creating truly consistent dialog takes a lot of work. Probably more work than most roleplayers can muster; however, there's a simple trick to faking it well.

Early last year, a less-than-talkative gnome reminded me of that trick—namely, that keeping a character's speech patterns consistent requires nothing more complex than thinking about what your character says when you're out of ideas. In this case, I decided that if I couldn't come up with consistent dialog, I just wouldn't say anything.

It all began when Dave Noonan, a designer and editor in Wizards' R&D department, was planning to take a group through the *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*, and I needed a character. I had been playing (and playtesting) the new edition for more than a year, and I knew that gnomes had changed. Leaner, spikier, and more capable than in previous editions, gnomes seemed worth a look, especially since I wanted to play an arcane spellcaster. Since I was already convinced that the gnome stereotypes of previous editions didn't apply anymore, I wanted to play a character that played up the change, specifically, a character that clearly wasn't reminiscent of the bumbling tinker gnomes made popular in the *Dragonlance* line. (Don't get me wrong—silly gnomes, like silly members of any PC race, have their place, but I wanted something different, and a non-talking gnome seemed new to me at the time.) One well-placed default array later, I had created Rook, a gnome illusionist who rarely spoke.

Anyone who knows me will tell you that I like the sound of my own voice, and playing Rook presented a terribly difficult roleplaying challenge—keeping my mouth shut. Basing Rook on the reversal of a few long-held ideas about gnomes wasn't terribly original, but right away I noticed that the other players caught on. Since Rook's most noticeable trait was identifiable as something out of the ordinary for his race, the other players found it easy to predict Rook's reactions (or lack thereof), and by coincidence, I found it easy to keep the character's dialog consistent (or nonexistent). Although we didn't make it all the way through the temple, we played for several months. Throughout the short-lived campaign, Rook seldom spoke other than to give terse, one-word answers. His longest statement, which came after finding yet another scroll full of divine spells (arcane scrolls seemed hard to come by) was something like, "Stupid temple full of stupid priests."

By dumb luck I had hit on an idea that kept my character's dialog consistent almost by default. As fun as the not-speaking trick was to do once, it's hardly a solution that many players find appealing to roleplay. So, how do you keep your character's dialog consistent? I'm especially interested in simple ideas that, like Rook's lack of speech, create an easily recognizable set of responses to most situations. Email your ideas to [scalemail@wizards.com](mailto:scalemail@wizards.com), and we'll print the best of them in upcoming letters columns.

Jesse Decker  
Editor-in-Chief

## Dragon

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# SCALE MAIL



Hey, there's a new art director in town. Many of you saw Pete Whitley's good-bye in *DRAGON* #28g, but we're up to full strength again. Lisa Chido has joined the staff as art director, and this is her first issue. Since Lisa is still forming her own ideas about the magazine, there's never been a better time to influence the look of *DRAGON*. Drop a note to [scalemail@wizards.com](mailto:scalemail@wizards.com) and share your ideas about how the magazine looks.

## Hats off to Dragon

I wanted to thank you for perhaps the two most useful articles ever found in *DRAGON* Magazine: the Kaiju article and the martial arts techniques name generator from issue #28g. These are the most ingenious things I've seen in the D&D market in ages, and I'd like to reiterate my thanks for your inclusion of them into the issue—thanks *DRAGON*!

Lastly, I was wondering if you'd consider doing an article on magic hats and other headware? For some reason, I've had a difficult time designing anything original for my characters' skulls. Thanks!

Thomas Barry  
Southfield City, MI

### SHARE YOUR OPINION

#### MAIL

#### "SCALE MAIL"

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Include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed, and let us know how much of that address you'd like printed. (We'll assume city and state otherwise.)

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#### CALL

(800) 395-7760

Thanks for the kind words. Our favorite martial arts move is "Three Kaiju stomp Waterdeep." As for the magic hats, we're always looking for magic item articles—even hats.

## Bones to Pick

I just visited my friendly neighborhood game and hobby store to see if they had the new *Oriental Adventures* book; to my delight they did. Instead of being pleased with what I read, however, I found myself disappointed with some of its conception. I've always had an

affinity for the culture that I saw in Samurai films and Chinese chop saki films. The grace and flow of martial arts always impressed me far more than the grunts and thrusts of occidental longsword battle. That being said, I have a few points of contention with the *Oriental Adventures* system.

As both player and DM, I've always believed the great thing about high fantasy was the ability to bring many cultures and styles of combat together in a multifaceted campaign setting. Instead of showing how you can bring these two cultures together (European and Asian), the book separates the two campaign settings, even giving us class restrictions as to which classes should and should not be in an Asian campaign world. Are you telling me that the designers couldn't figure out how a druid or bard could fit into a campaign with an Asian overtone, or how a samurai or sohei could fit into a campaign with a more European flavor? This is also true for the new races. Who's to say that there isn't a tribe of those monkey people—the Vanara—living next to a village of halflings?

Then there's the samurai class. When I heard that *Oriental Adventures* was coming out, I thought I'd finally see a definitive class breakdown of a samurai. Instead, I get a glorified fighter that comes with his own katana. Who cares? I know the animal clan separation aspect might make for some unique choices, but if I'm going to play a samurai, I want it to be a truly unique experience, and I want him to have his own powers and system of fighting.

I found a breakdown of a samurai character class on the Internet that I think is much more appealing than the one in *Oriental Adventures*. Some of the unique features include an ability for

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR EVERY D&D PLAYER.

Having a realistic rendering of a character can help make a PC seem more "real" and therefore easier to roleplay. Unfortunately, most of us usually end up with a lovely drawing of a stick figure or something that a 5-year old would create in Kindergarten. But the Hero Machine has come to the rescue of the artistically challenged! This interactive online tool allows you to custom design and print out your PC's full body portrait. The website is still waiting for a newer version that includes more options (we've seen a preview of it, and it's definitely worth the wait), but the current design tool lets you choose from a number of facial expressions, hairstyles, different clothing pieces, and weapons, as well as pick from a wide range of color options for each item. Check out [www.heromachine.com](http://www.heromachine.com) to begin creating stunning portraits like this one created by Hero Machine creator, Jeff Hebert. Thanks to reader Dino for showing us this fun tool!





# forum

## You Gotta Have Goals . . .

In *DRAGON* #288, Geoff Davey ("Hero Seeks Same") expressed his chagrin at the notion of a game centering around evil PCs. I agree with his complaints to most degrees, but I believe my experiences have given me another angle.

Recently, the new edition release of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* has given rise to a truly unique adventure group. One of the PCs is Dralek—a Drow telepath. He is a hero to none, and his deeds grow ever more villainous. He remains entertaining, however, because of what many evil PCs lack: focus. His evil is subtle, charming, and nonviolent, and he has seen to it personally that his friends (the Zentarim, currently) find him increasingly vital. Thus, I propose that the secret to a good "anti-hero" campaign is the advancement of goals, just as in the most noble of journeys.

Scott Hamilton • Whitesburg, TN

## The Evil Twin

I'm responding to the old argument of playing a good versus an evil PC. In the past, *DRAGON*'s response was that it detracted from the game and went against the whole purpose of D&D. I have one small comment to point out that I feel is very relevant to the situation. If you recall *DRAGONLANCE* hero Sturm Brightblade, you will also recall his son, Steel Brightblade. Steel was a member of a group of evil Paladins, who followed their own evil god. They were exact mirrors of the "good" paladins, except they followed an evil deity. My point is simple: Evil characters are nothing more than identical twins to good characters and have the same traits. It's how you play the character that really determines whether or not a group survives.

Upon discussion, my DM and I came to the conclusion that the alignment system was flawed everyone's thinking and should be

summoning inner strength, in which a ki-op cry gives the samurai an extra +4 to his Strength a number of times per day; an ability called study foe that allows the samurai the chance to lose AC for a couple of rounds while he studies his opponents' weaknesses, which then grants him subsequent bonuses to attack and damage; and a whirlwind defense ability, which allows a samurai to defend himself effectively against many opponents. The samurai also gets no penalty for wearing armor, has access to a feature resembling uncanny dodge, and gets the feats Quick Draw, Whirlwind Attack, Alertness, and Spring Attack for free. Yes, this character might be very stacked, but I find it hard to believe that no one could come up with something flashier than just a fighter that looks like a samurai.

Lastly—and most upsetting—is the lack of a ninja base class. I know that there are plenty of ninja prestige classes, but this isn't helpful. If you're going to have Asian classes, you simply must have a ninja. This seems like a no brainer. I don't accept the argument that a ninja class would be unbalanced. If so, design something that's not.

Name and address withheld

## Seriously Funny

I first started reading *DRAGON Magazine* about ten years ago. Recently, I've started to look back rather fondly on the more serious, serialized comics that your predecessors used to run.

"Twilight Empire" (AKA Robinson's War) was a favorite, and I've heard old-timer's say some great things about "SnarfQuest" in its prime.

"Dragonmirth," "Phil and Dixie," and the others are great, but have you guys considered running another one of those multi-year comic sagas again? They were once one of my favorite parts of the magazine.

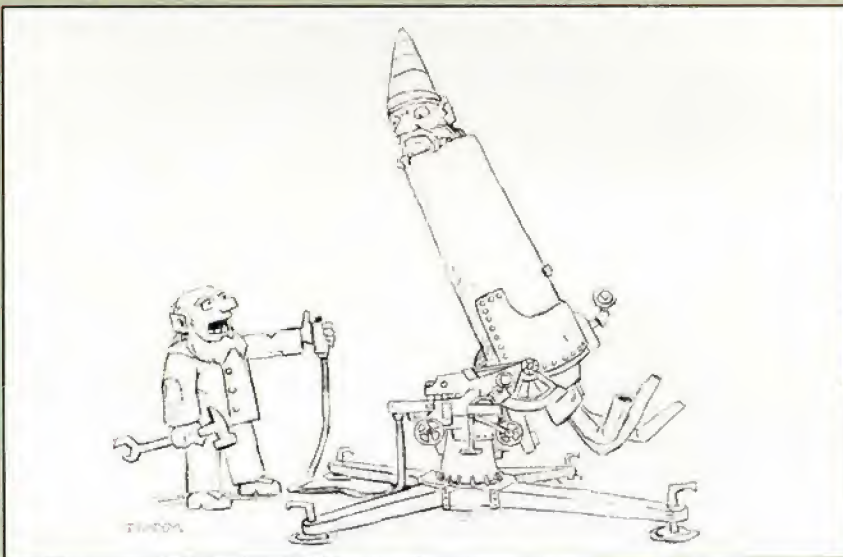
Yamo

Posted to *DRAGON* Message Boards

## Countdown Contrariness

I subscribed to *DRAGON Magazine* in the hopes of getting useful information for use in my D&D game mastering efforts. However, the incessant "countdown" articles were a waste of space. I view the *FORGOTTEN REALMS*—and all pre-packaged campaign settings—as a crutch for weak DMs. In a pinch, I use them, but I much prefer my own—they're generally richer. The space used to count down to—that is, "hype"—a product's release spends time, money, energy, and space

## caption contest



Show me the funny! **WRITE A CAPTION** for this cartoon and test your funny bone. Send your written caption to Caption/*DRAGON Magazine*, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057 by March 1st. If your caption passes our test and makes assistant editor Matthew Sernett laugh, you just might see it within the pages of this glorious magazine. There's no need to cut up your magazine. If you want to include the drawing, send in a photocopy.



expanded with one more attribute. Alignments should also include the category of Selfless, Neutral, and Selfish. Let's face it: The single deciding factor in whether or not a character is genuinely evil or good is how selfish he is. We have played a nearly all-evil party, whose characters were every bit as loyal and strong to each other as a good party. They were loyal because their goals were one and the same.

Just a few comments I feel were overlooked. I thank you for an awesome publication and look forward to each and every issue!

R. McGuire • Killeen, TX

## TELL US WE'RE WRONG.

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that would be better used for "Sage Advice," another prestige class, or a treatment of some aspect of the game that has significant differences from the earlier systems.

Now I get to experience the joy of opening an issue and finding oversized maps for a world I will never use, and worse, no one can use unless they DM the FORGOTTEN REALMS! It will take four months for the run to complete, and I feel robbed.

I understand *DRAGON Magazine* is less an outlet for creative d20 ideas and more a house organ to sell more Wizards of the Coast (WotC) product—that's evident in the multi-page advertisements for WotC novels, games, and stores. It's unfortunate, because more articles like the "creating a..." would go a lot farther to enhance the vitality of the d20 system—and therefore the vitality of WotC's product line—in the long term.

Play aids, more terrain inserts, another CD, or even extra pages of "DM's Workshop," fiction, almost anything would be better than an oversized FORGOTTEN REALMS map.

Ketjak

Posted to *Dragon* Message Boards

The amount of world-specific content in *DRAGON* is almost never going to be exactly perfect for any one reader, still we aim to please as many as we can.

First, let's look at exactly how many pages of FORGOTTEN REALMS-specific content was in each of the past four issues:

#288 had 4 (and part 2 of the map)

#287 had 6 (and part 1 of the map)

#286 had 6

#285 had 5

If I've counted wrong here, please correct me.

Every reader is going to have a different idea of how easy those articles are to drop into their own campaign, but I think most need only a name change (if that) to use. If you folks think they're harder to port than that, what can we do to help? If adding a sidebar about using the FORGOTTEN REALMS articles in another campaign will do the trick, just let us know.

I'd also like to point out that we're happy to buy other world-specific articles if they're well written and contain interesting ideas. Plus, *DRAGON* is about to get more GREYHAWK content than ever.

We plan to add more "using this in your game" sidebars to many articles, even non-world-specific features, but I'd love to hear some more suggestions from our readers.

For what it's worth, I think *DRAGON* presents creative ideas that lots of D&D players find useful.



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### FEBRUARY



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# PREVIEWS

## DRAGON Magazine #292 Wilderness!

DRAGON Magazine #292 is out in the woods and up to no good! The saurials are back—play one as a PC or face the dinosaur-like creatures in battle! Be the barbarian you've always wanted to be with new class combos. Face terrifying new plant monsters. Make the most of the ranger class. Raise the ghosts of dinosaurs and bring the blood of the earth boiling up from below using new druid spells.

Inside you'll also find "Class Acts," "Cities of the Ages," and "Elminster's Guide to the Realms." And as always, you'll find advice, tools, and tactics to improve your game!

\$5.99 U.S./\$8.99 CAN

Product No. 82292

## DUNGEON Magazine #90 Pulp Heroes

December's DUNGEON features a complete issue of the newly revised POLYHEDRON Magazine. Now with a "Definitive d20" focus, the new POLYHEDRON brings a complete d20 game in every issue in addition to industry news, previews, reviews, and the latest RPGA updates. December's issue features Pulp Heroes, a 50+-page, stand-alone game set in the Pulp Era. Guide your team of aviators, private-eyes, and magicians against Nazi robots and power-mad sorcerers in the latest d20 offering from Wizards of the Coast.

## Tears for Twilight Hollow

by Angel Leigh McCoy  
and Christopher Perkins

The soul of a hero has been imprisoned by forces of darkness. The PCs must find a way to send this captive holy warrior to her eternal reward. A D&D FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for

# caption contest winner



### WINNER

"You know, Mabel, if we're going to live together, I'm going to need my own key for the front door."

Congratulations Andrew Reyes • Bloom, IN

### RUNNER-UP

"Uh... Avon Calling?"

Mardie Swartz • Marlin, TX

7th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 3-12.

## The Elfwhisper

by J.C. Alvarez

A hunt for a ruthless bandit warlord leads the heroes into the haunted Wildwood, where a ghostly choir of dead elves laments the fall of an ancient empire and its beautiful princess. A D&D adventure for 8th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 4-12.

## Totentaz

by Bernard Mees

Luzern has become a city where the dead never rest for long. Can the PCs unravel the mystery of the strange curse that seems to have befallen this once-peaceful village? A D&D

adventure for 4th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 1-8.

## Wedding Bells

by Tim Hitchcock

The characters venture down a dark and forbidding well to recover the treasure of a lost kingdom, but they might find a watery grave waiting for them instead. A D&D adventure for 5th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 3-13.

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## Robin D. Laws

### Laying Down The Law

For all of his publication credits, game-design experience, and complete immersion into the gaming industry, Robin D. Laws acknowledges that there are still empires for him to conquer. "The more I work on roleplaying games and the more panels I attend," he says, "the more I realize that the work game designers do only affects maybe 40 percent of the gaming experience in terms of whether players enjoy themselves and want to keep playing. The other 60 percent comes down to the success players and DMs have in communicating with one another, understanding each other's expectations, and puzzling out the unwritten rules that experienced DMs and players take for granted."

With *DRAGON* columns such as "The Play's the Thing" and articles like "Taste Test: Pleasing All of the Players All of the Time" (from issue #284), Robin hopes to address this issue head-on by finding ways for beginning DMs to adopt the various techniques a good DM uses without having to analyze them. Just as important as aiding new DMs with articles geared toward them, he says, is addressing articles to players because "it's really the whole group that can benefit from thinking about this stuff."

#### By Laws

When it comes to weighing DM needs against player needs, Robin knows his audience well. His resume of designs is impressive, full of popular, successful games that continue to steadily draw new players. *Feng Shui*, originally published by Daedalus Entertainment in 1996, has recently returned to the forefront of popular roleplaying products. "I predicted a couple of years ago that Hong Kong action movies would filter into the entertainment mainstream among game fans," Robin notes. "I'm still not through patting myself on the

back for the accuracy of that prediction." *Feng Shui* is now published by Atlas Games, and Robin has just finished a new adventure for the setting—*Burning Shaolin*.

Robin is equally pleased by the continued success of his collectible card game *Shadowfist*, now six years old, which continues to thrive thanks to its fervent fan base.

But the innovative roleplaying game *Rune*, published by Atlas Games, is the most recent of Robin's outstanding designs. Based on the computer game of the same name, *Rune* breaks the wall between player and GM, as Robin determined early on in the design process that "the game would need to have a big point of difference to distinguish it from the many other fantasy games available."

The subject matter of the computer game—"mighty Vikings wielding swords the size of Buicks slashing down all the goblins, dwarves, mechanized bugs, and giant undead unfortunate enough to get in their way"—actually posed a problem in adapting to roleplaying: GMs tend to get bored refereeing hack-'n'-slash campaigns. To deal with this problem, Robin explains that *Rune* allows the players to swap GMing duties and, he says, "You can win! And when you're not the GM, it's not boring because the GM can win!"

Robin concedes that it's all a grand experiment, although he points out that he's certain there is a neglected segment of the audience that will really enjoy the game. "We're managing to get a nice little bit of attention, even in this year of d20 fever, and I think that's because it does something different, and it does so with wild-eyed, horned-helmet enthusiasm."

#### Round Robin

In addition to his work on *Rune*, Robin recently finished work on a *Dying Earth* sourcebook, *White-Walled Kaiin*, which details the setting's biggest city. Robin was the senior designer for the *Dying Earth Roleplaying Game*, set in the exotic, colorful fantasy setting of the classic Jack Vance stories where "verbal duels, swindles, and wonderfully weird

magic are the order of the day."

He also has stories in *Synister Creative's* new pulp magazine and in a fiction anthology, *The Book of All Flesh*, for the *All Flesh Must Be Eaten Roleplaying Game*. "The first is a light-hearted adventure, and the other is really, really dark," he says. "I'm stoked about both of them."

D&D continues to figure large in his daily activities, but his campaigns generally reflect his professional obligations of the moment. "My current campaign is set in a version of ancient Rome, under the reign of Commodus," he says. "The PCs are struggling to make their patron proconsul, hoping to stop an evil priest with minotaur minions from grabbing the post."

Roleplaying games, he notes, were always a hobby as he was growing up. "Even when my age was in the single digits, I knew I wanted to be a writer," he recalls. "In grade school, I thought it would be comics. In high school, I got involved in theater and figured I'd end up a playwright. I never thought of roleplaying games as a market for my work. Who knew I'd end up writing about battlechimps and deodands?"

#### UNCOMMON LAWS

Robin draws inspiration from a variety of different sources, some familiar, some a bit more unusual.

**FAVORITE FILMS:** *Yojimbo*, *Citizen Kane*

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** *The Red and the Black*, *The Good Soldier*, *Fifth Business*

**FAVORITE TV SHOWS:** *The Simpsons*, *Homicide*, *The Sopranos*

**FAVORITE ARTISTS:** René Magritte, Lawren Harris, Yves Tanguy

**FAVORITE CDS:** *Midnight Vultures* (Beck), *Pontiac* (Lyle Lovett), *Beat at Cinecitta 3* (various artists)

**FAVORITE GAMES DESIGNED BY SOMEONE ELSE:** *Over the Edge*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Prince Valiant*



## All I Need to Know I Learned from D&D

### LESSON #5: Sooner or Later, Luck Favors the DM

#### Looting the Labyrinth

As I was developing Castle Greyhawk's dungeon levels, I gave each level a name: the Dungeons, the Catacombs, the Crypts, the Lesser Caves, the Greater Caves, the Lesser Caverns, the Greater Caverns, and so forth. When I came to the 6th level, I decided to name it "the Labyrinth."

It was 1973, and at that point I'd only been DMing for a few months, so not all of my ideas were sound. Naming the levels was fine, and using those names to create themed encounters was also not a bad idea. When I designed the Labyrinth level, everything seemed to be proceeding well. At the northern end of the Labyrinth were a series of large chambers, while to the south lay a number of mazes populated with monsters such as wereboars and, of course, minotaurs. The large chambers had four exits in the cardinal directions. Separating these were large areas of seemingly solid stone, which each held a secret door leading to a repository of magical goodies. Each repository held only one type of treasure—potions; scrolls; magic armor, shields, and weapons; and gems, money, and nonmagic items. Soon after the 6th level was open for exploration, Robilar, Tenser, Terik, and a number of other PCs found their way to the place.


After doing some cursory exploration and monster-battling, the team

concentrated on the large, linked northern chambers. For no apparent reason, one of the PCs checked for and happily found a secret door in one of the walls. Thus, the potion repository was decimated, and the joyous PCs ascended to ground level. Returning for more potions and confused by the maze I had created, the PCs found the wrong secret door the next time they entered the Labyrinth. Instead of acquiring more potions, they found scrolls! On two subsequent forays, the same confusion occurred, so that all four of the repositories were thus partially stripped of their treasure.

Thinking to find even greater loot, the team now purposely sought unexplored areas. Greed was rewarded, but only in the eyes of the DM, for in addition to the four troves of magical loot, I included two others, each with an ancient black dragon lying in stasis. The PCs' fifth trip to the Labyrinth freed the female of the pair. After taking some rather nasty damage, the PCs fled. Of course, after healing they decided to return again—their dreams of more treasure getting the best of them. To their satisfaction, the PCs managed to avoid encountering the female black dragon. However, to my delight, they instead went directly to the secret door behind which the male dragon was held, opened it, and freed him. In the ensuing battle, the team sought to subdue the

dragon but failed. Soon the PCs were fleeing for their lives, and Robilar was saved only because he had covered his back with a gargoyle he had forced to serve him. With that monster's remains dripping down the back of his magic armor, the worthy fighter escaped . . . in a way.

The rest of the party had taken a different escape route. Robilar, possessing *boots of flying*, headed for a shaft that went upward several levels. As he ascended, down came a purple worm. Luck was on the side of the DM that day, because the encounter with the purple worm was the result of a rolled random encounter. Fleeing eastward at full speed, Robilar forgot about the black pudding that made its lair in a hollow passageway. Fortunately for him, he managed to escape the black dragons and the purple worm, but his *boots of flying* were dissolved by the lurking black pudding. Thereafter, the 6th level of Castle Greyhawk was avoided, as it was the home of the loosed black dragons and possibly an allied purple worm.

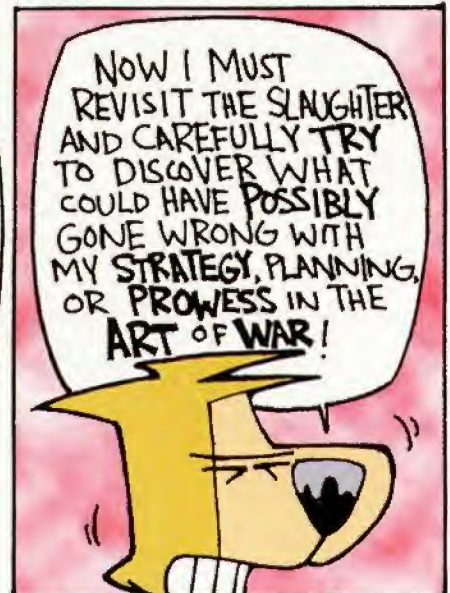
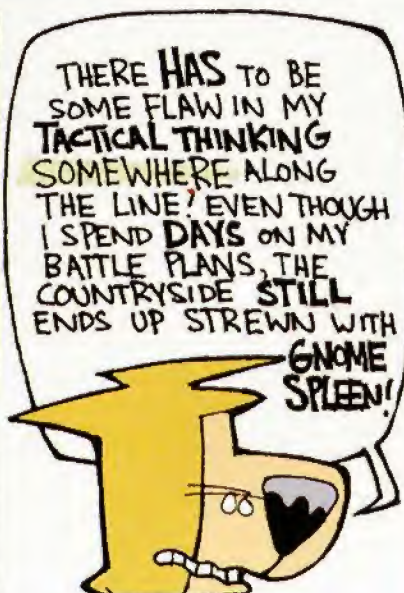
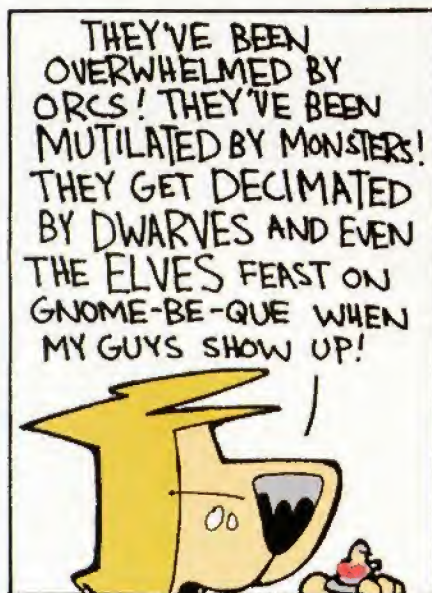
The moral to this story is purely for the DM. When your players' greedy side kicks in, don't despair. Luck is fickle, and it is only a matter of time before it goes against them. The result will no doubt be a number of amusing stories you can relate at the expense of the players as compensation for all your hard work. 

## ZOGONIA

BY TONY MOSELEY











by James Jacobs ✱ illustrated by Anthony Waters

# Study & Jest

THE SECRET LIFE OF GNOMES

Ask most people what a gnome is and you'll get a variety of answers. "They're like dwarves, but not as grumpy." Or, "They're like elves, but not as serious." Or, "They're like halflings, but they wear funny pointy hats." Of course, a gnome would never answer like this. Ask a gnome what a gnome is and you're more likely to get a funny look and a roll of the eyes. If you do get an answer, it'll probably be something clever: "We're just like you, only smart and good-looking!"





### ✱ Birth & Childhood

Childbirth is a private time for gnome families. For the majority of the mother's pregnancy, she enjoys the company of her friends, family, and neighbors, who often visit with gifts and stories. A pregnant gnome is assured that her time is always full of fun and entertainment. This all changes when the expectant mother reaches the final month of her term.

At this time, the mother retires to her home to be tended and cared for by her immediate family. During childbirth, the mother is tended to by her husband and a midwife (typically an alchemist or herbalist). Other close family members and friends are not allowed into the birthing chamber during the delivery, reducing possible distractions; they wait out the birth in an antechamber. At least one cleric attends the birth in this antechamber in case difficulties during

the birth require magical intercession.

Gnomes don't think of names as unique personal identifiers, a fact that many non-gnomes find particularly frustrating. A gnome receives his first name minutes after childbirth (usually granted by one of the parents), and by the end of the day, the child usually racks up at least a half dozen more. By the time a gnome reaches adulthood, he's collected an impressive list of names. The gnome's skill with language allows him to easily keep track of numerous names, but it can wreak havoc with his non-gnome friends.

Immediately after childbirth, the baby is introduced to its birth pet. Gnomes are quite fond of small animals, due in no small part to the fact that from birth they are linked with an equally newborn animal. A gnome baby is coddled and smothered with affection by his parents, but he spends as much (if not more)

time with the small newborn animal his parents have selected as a birth pet. Birth pets are traditionally small burrowing animals such as badgers, moles, gophers, rabbits, foxes, or burrowing reptiles like snakes or lizards. The two forge a powerful bond and often develop a strong sense of empathy.

Gnome babies are quick to pick up on language skills, and by the time they reach an age of 3 months, they are already forming their first words. For the first year of life, the gnome can do little more than mimic words and sentences he hears, but the particular words and sentences that he chooses to mimic are often strong indicators of what the gnome's future interests and talents as an adult might be. Gnomes feel that it's unlucky to actively encourage a specific set of interests in a gnome baby, and many feel that such activities tend





to result in pensive, brooding children. This gift with language extends even to the gnome's birth pet; indeed, gnome children often master their birth pet's language before any other. This language consists of soft chattering sounds and is often quite intricate; the language is almost magical in that it incorporates a fair amount of telepathically transmitted empathy. As the gnome grows older and begins to speak gnome or other spoken tongues, his skills with his birth pet language atrophy to a point where the gnome can only communicate with creatures in this manner for a short period of time each day.

### ✿ Rites of Passage

For the first few years of life, the young gnome is kept close to her parents and birth pet. By the time the gnome has learned to walk and talk, her parents become less protective and allow the young gnome free reign throughout the house, yard, and nearby outdoor areas. Gnome children make early contact with other young gnomes and form friendships at this time that often last a lifetime, but still, most of their play focuses on interacting with

their birth pets. Young gnomes often pretend they are animals, possibly the brothers or sisters of their birth pets, and they spend many hours digging around in the dirt with their companions.

Accidents are common at this time as the young gnome learns about things like fire, poisonous plants, wild animals, and other dangers the hard way. Non-gnomes often think of this method of raising children as irresponsible, but gnomes feel that experience teaches far more efficiently than dry lectures or overblown warnings.

It is at this early age that a gnome's magical abilities first start to develop. The young gnome has little control over these magical abilities at first, and they manifest as short-lived motes of multi-colored light,

strange faint noises, and unseen forces that move small, unattended objects in strange patterns. As the gnome grows over the next several years, her control over these minor magical abilities becomes more refined and focused, eventually allowing the gnome to cast cantrips (*dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, and *prestidigitation*). Some gnomes never fully master these magical skills because they simply lack the intelligence to do so. A sharp wit and quick intellect are the most valued aspects of life in gnome society, and children who lack the skills to control their magical abilities become objects of scorn and ruthless torment by their one-time friends. Gnomes quickly learn to suppress their undeveloped magical skills after being subjected to these cruel attentions.

By the time gnomes reach the age of ten, they often form small groups of like-minded children who spend long hours together playing. Favored pastimes include playing the glittering path, (see "The Little-Lympics" on page 36 for more information on the glittering path), magic competitions (the children strive to find the funniest or cleverest use of their powers), and inventing and building toys, vehicles, and often entire miniature villages and buildings.

### ✿ Going to School

Gnome schools are very traditional and rigidly structured. A school term runs an entire year, with a two-week vacation at the turn of each season and various other days off throughout the year to observe religious or secular holidays. A school week runs for six days, followed by one day off during which the gnome is expected to practice his creative interests. Gnome schools have an unusual dress code; all students and teachers must wear traditional scholar's caps, commonly called "pointy hats."

Gnomes are organized into classes by age and gender, and the standard age at which they begin schooling is 30 years old. A typical day at school lasts for six hours, divided into five classes of various subjects. A class lasts for a year, after which the gnomes are evaluated by their teachers and then, if they have demonstrated sufficient skills, allowed to progress to the next grade of education. Gnomes divide school into nine grades of education. The first three grades of school cover the basics of various subjects like mathematics, history, reading, and writing. The second three grades of school become more focused, and the student is allowed to choose a particular venue of scholastic pursuit. The classes offered are still rigidly constructed and generalized. Not all of these classes teach skills; many of them teach young gnomes special tricks (such as how to effectively fight against goblinoids, dodge giants, or use metamagic feats). During the last three grades, the gnome is rewarded with the responsibility of directing his own education. He can organize his own classes and conduct independent research under the guidance of favorite teachers and professors. These gnomes are also often called upon to serve as teachers or aides in the education of first- and second-grade gnomes.

Eventually, the scholar earns enough commendations from his professors, teachers, and mentors to allow him to apply for graduation. To graduate, the student must prepare a specific thesis, experiment, or demonstration in his chosen field of study. His final year at school is often dominated by this Final Showing, as it is called. A Final Showing is observed and studied by no less than nine of the gnome's mentors, and all nine of them must judge the Final



Showing favorably in order for the gnome to progress to Certification.

Certification is the most grueling part of a gnome's education. He is allowed a week of respite between his Final Showing and his Certification; wise gnomes spend this week in study and preparation, but many gnomes spend the week celebrating their imminent graduation. Certification always begins at the crack of dawn and sees the nervous scholar sitting alone at a desk facing the nine mentors who judged his Final Showing. These mentors spend the next six hours grilling the student with hundreds of complicated questions, trying their best to test the limits of the gnome's accumulated knowledge. Certification is a stressful event, but by this point most students have so immersed themselves in their chosen field that they can demonstrate their knowledge to a sufficient degree that their mentors approve their Certification even if the gnome stumbles through the ordeal.

Of course, school is not just a time for study. Classes only consume six hours a day, leaving many more open for non-scholastic pursuits. Some gnomes spend this time studying, but most spend the time socializing. Truthfully, this is just as important to the development of the growing gnome as his studies, and it helps the gnome prepare for life as a full-fledged member of society.

There are a few gnomes who can't handle their education. A gnome might reject his education for any number of reasons. He might be bitter after a childhood spent being mocked by his more intelligent friends, he might just be a loner or someone who eschews society and would prefer to make his own way through life, or he might actually be bored by his studies. It's not unheard of for such gnomes to drop out of school simply because they feel that education has nothing to offer them. Gnome dropouts still find places in society, often as laborers or soldiers.

### ✱ Courtship, Marriage, & Family

School is an important part of a gnome's growth, but it often takes a back seat to an equally important development—puberty. Young gnomes often become involved in romantic relationships during school. Such relationships are all but unheard of at earlier ages, and when such relationships

occur they are looked upon unfavorably by adults; it isn't proper for an uneducated gnome to engage in idle trysts, after all.

Once school begins, this all changes. Many gnomes meet their future husbands and wives in school, and for some gnomes, the prospect of meeting a spouse is the driving factor for enrollment. Gnomes are creatures of impulse, though, and more often than not these relationships end as quickly as they began. Curiously, gnomes of both genders tend to express their interest in a partner not by giving gifts or composing poetry, but by playing practical jokes on the object of their desire. The more intricate and unique the joke, the better the gnome's chances are of being noticed. Once a couple gets over these jokes and is comfortable together, it's common for them to turn their impish natures against their friends and relatives. One gnome alone can concoct devilish practical jokes, but the heat of passion experienced by young gnome lovers seems to push their imaginations and creativity into overdrive.

Eventually, a gnome couple realizes that they want to spend the rest of their lives together. This realization often comes suddenly, and gnomes are wont to act on this realization immediately. Gnome weddings are traditionally small and unassuming affairs, but this is more a result of lack of time to plan and prepare than irreverence toward tradition. It is very unusual for an engagement to last longer than a month; more often, it lasts for only a week. The marriage itself is traditionally performed by a cleric, although marriages performed by alchemists, wizards, sages, or any other respected gnome are recognized as official unions provided at least three witnesses swear to the event. Once a gnome couple weds, they are expected to set up their own home and work together to provide something useful for the village. Gnomes are also expected to wait until after they graduate from school to get married. Nevertheless, many gnomes can't wait that long and get married in secret while still in school.

Divorce and remarriage are fairly common in gnome society. Creatures of impulse, they often suddenly realize that they'd be happier with a different

### ✱ Practical Jokes

One unique aspect of gnome society is the practical joke. For other races, such jokes are looked upon as idle amusements. For gnomes, though, a good practical joke can be as important as a wedding or funeral. Indeed, it isn't uncommon for practical jokes to end with weddings or funerals.

Practical jokes are traditionally perpetrated by one gnome on another single gnome. Other gnomes are often called upon for assistance or to play specific roles in carrying off the joke, but there is one mastermind and one victim at the center of the mess. Once a gnome realizes she's the butt of a practical joke, the joke ends.

Depending on its success, the perpetrator is either showered with praise or ridiculed terribly. The victim of the joke is always the most vocal in this praise or ridicule. Of course, the victim is expected to some day extract revenge on the joker in the form of a bigger and more elaborate joke of her own design.

Many intricate and effective practical jokes can be designed with magic (especially with illusions), but the most memorable jokes involve completely non-magical components. Against non-gnomes, this tradition is relaxed somewhat, since non-gnomes don't understand the hard work and skill needed to pull off a good zinger, resulting in wasted effort.

A practical joke can be a simple affair (such as drilling a tiny hole in a bottle of ink so that the victim dribbles it all over his clothing, or hiding a piece of rotten food in a gnome's house and watching as they tear the place apart looking for the source of the stink) or an incredibly complex design (such as building a booby-trapped house for a friend).

spouse, or perhaps with no spouse at all. In cases where both partners feel the same way, annulment of a marriage is a quick and painless event requiring little more than a splitting of common belongings and signing of a legal document to be stored in the town hall. In cases where one of the gnomes still harbors strong feelings for the other, divorces can be ugly events that end in loud and often violent altercations. These separations result in one or both gnomes moving out of the neighborhood or



## ✱ Pointy Hats

The size of a gnome's pointy hat directly relates to his education. First grade gnomes who have just been admitted wear very short hats with a slightly pronounced point at the top. As the gnome rises in grade level, he is allowed to wear taller and taller caps. The material from which the pointy hat is made (including color schemes) varies from school to school. In this manner, one gnome can instantly tell the grade and home school of another gnome simply by glancing at the other gnome's hat. Teachers and professors get to wear the tallest hats. Such hats measure at least 15 inches in height, possibly more for important professors. These hats often bear enchantments as well; many gnomes with the Craft Wondrous Item feat make magic pointy hats to give as gifts for favorite mentors. Gnomes who can't afford magic hats often opt for masterwork pointy hats. A masterwork pointy hat typically grants a +2 bonus to all Diplomacy checks made with other gnomes and gains a +1 bonus to all saving throws to avoid its destruction. This bonus to saving throws does not stack with any bonuses the hat may receive for being enchanted. Masterwork pointy hats are often encrusted with gems and precious metals, and while their minimum cost is around 50 gp, they are often much more expensive.

A gnome caught wearing an inappropriate hat faces expulsion from his school. Once a gnome has graduated, he is no longer expected to wear his pointy hat, but many continue to do so out of pride. Gnomes who have not completed or attended school are allowed to wear pointy hats only if the hat is made of felt, red in color, and no more than 11 inches in length. Despite the somewhat awkward social stigma of wearing a commoner's pointy hat, unschooled gnomes wear them anyway since a hatless gnome can't be trusted.

Of course, there are exceptions. Gnomes tell stories of famous but eccentric gnome heroes who go hatless, but these are merely the exceptions that prove the rule. More often, a hatless gnome has been spurned from gnome society for good reason. But regardless of the cause, a hatless gnome means big trouble.

village to create a new life elsewhere.

Once a couple has a child, divorce is quite rare. Gnomes adore children, viewing their love of life and chaotic activities as a breath of fresh air. Parents are drawn even more closely together after having a child, and the concept of splitting up and causing anguish to the child is unthinkable.

## ✱ Society, Friends, & Pets

A gnome makes friends easily, even with non-gnomes. Gnome communities are fairly small, and they are almost always hamlets according to the classification system on page 137 of the *DUNGEON Master's Guide* (population of 400 or less). The reason for this is simple; gnomes have a natural desire to know and be friends with everyone in the immediate area. In large cities, this is plainly impossible, so when left to their own devices, gnomes naturally form smaller villages rather than sprawling metropolises. Nevertheless, it isn't unusual to see gnomes living in cities populated by other races. Even then, gnomes tend to focus on their immediate neighborhood, and they come to view this neighborhood as a separate entity apart from the city as a whole.

While gnomes are social creatures who enjoy the company of close friends and casual acquaintances alike, they also adore the natural world and the animals that live in it. This is another reason gnome villages tend to be small; hamlets are much less damaging and intrusive to nature. A gnome village is built to be at one with the natural surroundings; gnome architects make use of existing topography and vegetation to maximum potential, utilizing such features as foundations and even walls or roofs for buildings. Dwarves often mistake this practice as a sign of laziness, believing that the gnome carpenter is only building what is necessary. In truth, gnomes do this to live as close to the natural world as possible.

To a non-gnome, a gnome village can be hard to find. Many gnome villages are located on or just off of major trade routes, and merchants often travel these routes their entire lives without realizing the village exists. Artificial structures are often built to look like trees, rocks, or even hills. Not

only does this style allow the gnome to live at ease in nature, but it provides a valuable camouflage to protect gnome villages from their enemies.

Gnomes are not a warlike race, and as a general rule prefer to let their camouflaged buildings be their primary defense against their enemies. Goblins in particular have a hatred of gnomes, and vice versa. A gnome village won't normally have an organized militia, but the residents are so at ease and familiar with their neighbors that they can quickly form highly organized groups in times of crisis. Many gnome villages house a fair number of gnome laborers and soldiers who can provide ample protection, but they prefer to rely on magic and alchemy to fight the enemy. A gnome village located on a frontier or near hostile lands incorporates alchemical traps and magic wards to help protect the citizens. Tanglefoot bags are a particular favorite of gnomes; their ease of use and potent effects can often demoralize an invading force without either side ever having a chance to draw blood.

With the notable exception of kobolds and goblins, gnomes get along famously with the other humanoid races. This is partly due to the fact that gnomes seem to be naturally friendly and easy to get along with. The main reason for this is that there's a lot for other races to see and respect in gnome society. Dwarves have great respect for the gnome skill at gemcutting, and many dwarven miners look to their gnome neighbors when it comes time to polish and cut their yield. Elves approve of the respect for and knowledge of the natural world that gnomes possess, and the two races share a deep love and respect for arcane magic. Halflings get a kick out of the gnome sense of humor and empathize with the troubles those short of stature have living in a world filled with bigger folk. Gnomes, being kindly souls, often find themselves at odds with orcs and their ilk, but so long as goblins aren't involved, gnomes are okay with leaving these savage folk alone, if they keep their troubles to themselves.

Gnomes are also quite fond of animals, particularly burrowing mammals. A typical gnome household contains as many animal pets as gnome inhabitants, if not more. These pets are often allowed to wander about as they please; gnomes find the practice of



keeping pets in cages barbaric. If you have to keep your pet caged or leashed, well, then it's not really a pet, is it? It's little more than a prisoner. Gnomes also don't understand the common human practice of using animals as beasts of burden. This is little more than slavery to a gnome, and it is even more distasteful than keeping an animal in a cage. Of course, the fact that gnomes can actually talk to their pets makes it much easier for them to understand and befriend animals. In many ways, pets are more like guests who have chosen to stay in a gnome's house; often, such animals provide valuable services in return for the shelter. A badger might help a gnome dig out a new room for a house built into the side of a hill, or a bird might function as a doorbell.

### ✧ Superstitions & Beliefs

Gnomes have a fairly extensive pantheon of deities, but they are not overly superstitious or religious. The naturally analytic mind of a gnome has a hard time dealing with matters of faith; when confronted with a problem, a gnome is more apt to try to figure out what's causing the problem and how it can be fixed rather than simply accept the problem for what it is and learn to live with it. This is reflected in the gnome attitude toward magic; they are much more at ease manipulating the logical and rigid spells of the arcane path than the sometimes nebulous and often contradictory nature of divine magic. Gnomes can understand magic that builds things or breaks things, but magic that deals with the body and soul or the intervention of mystical forces from other realms tends to bore them. If it can't be seen, then what's the point?

Gnomes think of themselves as realists. Confronted by a problem, a gnome does his best to understand and overcome the situation. If it becomes apparent that the problem cannot be overcome, the gnome does what he can to avoid the problem. For example, if a gnome village is beset upon by terrible droughts three years in a row, the citizens might start to study weather patterns throughout history and try to figure out how the topography of the region could be affecting rainfall, rather than pray and hope for some mystical deliverance from the lean times. They might eventually decide to build an

aqueduct to pipe in water from a river miles distant, or even try to invent some sort of alchemical way to seed clouds and create rain themselves. The concept of holding out and hoping that the problem solves itself or that some other force or being fixes things never occurs to gnomes.

Nevertheless, clerics and druids are common sights in gnome settlements. Gnome clerics are somewhat unusual in that they prefer to view their deities as close friends or mentors rather than all-powerful beings. Gnome religious texts read more like historical accounts than myths. Their gods are heroic and embody all of the ideals a gnome could hope to live up to, but they are no more mysterious or special than the carpenter who built your outhouse or the neighbor who came home late from the tavern and threw up in your flowerbed. Gnome clerics tend to think of their spells as tricks "loaned" to them by their deity rather than an investiture of power. Gnome druids view their abilities as natural extensions of their deep study of nature and are thus the logical outgrowth of years of study and introspection. These views are difficult for gnomes to explain to non-gnomes, and they get frustrated when religious members of other races ask stupid questions. Visitors of this kind to gnome communities quickly become quite knowledgeable about the ins and outs of gnome practical jokes.

### ✧ Diamonds & Stinktar

Gnomes are very close to nature and eschew the sprawling cities and nations so valued by humanity and the other races. Still, gnomes are no less civilized than city-folk. Gnomes place a high value on personal skills and talents, and they have produced some of the most talented and accomplished craftsmen and artisans in the known world. But the fields where gnomes excel far and above all others are gemcutting and alchemy.

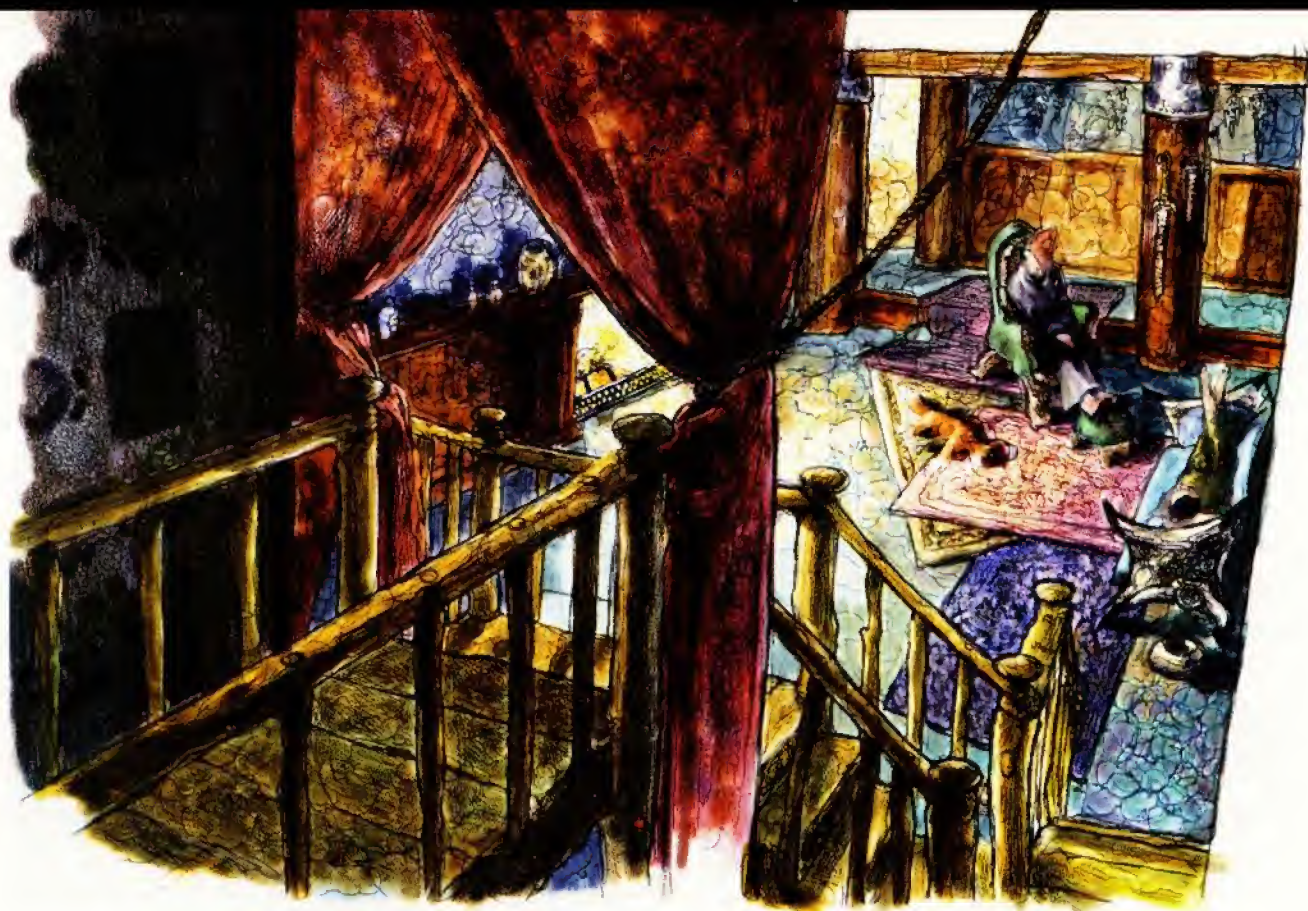
To a gnome, gems are more than pretty little minerals pulled from the earth; they are friends and companions, and each of them has a unique story to tell. Gnomes keep small collections of gemstones and jewels—often little

more than polished river stones or chunks of rock crystal. A skilled gnome gemcutter can coax great beauty out of a dirty rock picked from a horse's hoof, though, so to the untrained eye a gnome-polished hunk of quartz might look more valuable than a diamond. Despite this, gnomes truly value and love the most expensive gemstones, for it is these jewels that possess the greatest beauty and purest facets. A gnome might spend months studying an uncut gemstone, pondering the best way to cut and polish it so as to maximize its beauty. Often, a particularly precious gemstone goes uncut because no gnome feels skilled enough to do the gem justice.

Of course, the skill that gnomes are most famous for is alchemy. As alchemists, gnomes are unparalleled; the art of coaxing pseudo-magical effects out of common household ingredients and naturally occurring products has fascinated gnomes for untold ages. Gnome alchemists spend long hours examining and experimenting with chemicals, reagents, metals, plants, extracts, and anything else they can get their stained fingers on. Most alchemical discoveries are little more







than harmless chemical reactions that look interesting or produce a memorable smell or sound, but sometimes a gnome stumbles upon a true discovery like stinktar or red wrigglers. Gnome alchemists tend to work only with vague plans and half-formed goals; 99 percent of the time the truly useful alchemical discoveries are accidents.

### ✱ Gnome Alchemy

Gnomes continually experiment with alchemy; many famous alchemical items (such as the tanglefoot bag and the tindertwig) are said to have originally been gnome inventions. Presented here are several lesser known alchemical recipes that have been perfected by enterprising gnomes over the years. Each of the items listed below is given an Alchemy DC rating; this is the number required to prepare the item successfully.

**Spiderlilly Essence:** A single dose of spiderlilly essence is enough to coat a single Small creature. Each size increase requires twice the dosage of the previous size, and each size decrease requires only half the larger size's dosage. Spiderlilly essence is particularly noxious to most vermin

(with the notable exception of spiders, who ironically cannot detect the stuff). Fine vermin avoid creatures that wear the essence, and monstrous non-spider vermin must make a Will saving throw (DC 15) to attack the target. Once a vermin makes a Will save (DC 15) against essence of spiderlilly, it is immune to the essence for an hour. Spiderlilly essence lasts for one hour before it wears off.

**Glitterbright:** This sparkling liquid enhances flaws and facets in gemstones. Any Appraise or Craft (gemcutting) checks on a gem treated with a dose of glitterbright receive a +4 alchemical bonus. This effect lasts for 1 minute.

**Red Wiggler:** An active red wriggler is an ingenious invention that resembles a large writhing worm or centipede. In truth, a red wriggler is nothing more than a specially treated strip of fabric and twine about a foot long and no more than a half inch wide. When a red wriggler becomes wet, it becomes puffy and slimy and begins to twitch and undulate in place like a dying worm. The wriggler remains active for 3d6 rounds before the special resins finally cause the thing to melt

away into an acrid yellow cloud that quickly fades. Red wrigglers are popular items for practical jokes; a gnome often hides one in someone's bathing suit or slips one into someone's drink when they aren't looking. Red Wrigglers have little practical use, but their value as components for practical jokes is without bounds.

**Snortawake:** Snortawake is a pungent-smelling clear liquid that is kept in tiny glass vials. A single dose of snortawake poured into the mouth or nose of a living creature removes 1d8 points of subdual damage. This useful liquid got its name from the highly amusing snorting noises people tend to make after they are revived from being knocked unconscious.

**Stinktar:** Stinktar is a foul substance that is said to be the most successful alchemical accident of all time. The gnome who invented stinktar was trying to perfect a non-magical love potion;

| Item                | Cost  | Weight | Create DC |
|---------------------|-------|--------|-----------|
| Spiderlilly Essence | 75 gp | —      | 25        |
| Glitterbright       | 5 gp  | —      | 20        |
| Red Wiggler         | 1 gp  | 1 lb.  | 15        |
| Snortawake          | 25 gp | —      | 20        |
| Stinktar            | 50 gp | 1 lb.  | 25        |



instead all he invented was a viscous black, sticky ooze that reeks worse than a diseased ogre's cistern on a hot summer day. Stinktar is typically carried in tiny glass vials sealed with wax; these vials can be hurled as grenadelike missiles. Stinktar has a 10-ft. range increment, and deals no damage. Stinktar has no splash effect.

A creature struck by stinktar must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) or the tar sticks. As long as the reeking tar is stuck to the victim, he exudes a powerful stench, and his eyes constantly tear up from the fumes and make it difficult to concentrate on the task on hand. If the victim has a sense of smell, stinktar imposes a -4 penalty to Concentration, Diplomacy, Search, and Spot checks. Regardless of the victim's own ability to smell, stinktar imposes a -4 penalty to Hide checks made against targets with a sense of smell. Creatures struck by stinktar cannot use the scent ability and can be detected at four times the normal distance by other creatures with the scent ability. The effects of stinktar last for one hour. It takes one minute to scrape stinktar off of an affected creature or object.

### ✱ Social Classes, Justice, & Politics

Apart from the occasional alchemy experiment gone explosively wrong, gnome villages are idyllic places. Strife and crime are fairly rare in these regions, mostly because everyone knows everyone else in a gnome village. It's hard to be a thief in a town where your neighbor quickly recognizes your new gemstone collection and realizes you didn't really buy it from a merchant down by the old oak tree.

In other cultures, the leaders of society are traditionally the most attractive, the strongest, or simply those with enough dumb luck to be born into nobility. Gnomes have little interest in following this model. In a gnome village, the most important person is the smartest, wittiest person. You can wear all the makeup you want or bully the less fortunate for days, but you won't impress a gnome and earn her respect until you can outsmart her. Since intelligence and wisdom come with age, it's natural that gnomes would look to their elders for leadership and guidance. A typical gnome village is lead by one burgomaster who has demonstrated his or her quick wit time and time again, be

it in insult duels or through alchemical discoveries or by driving off enemies using tactics and subterfuge. The post of burgomaster is an elected one, and every year the gnome villagers hold new elections. New candidates are nominated by the villagers (typically there are no more than four contenders but sometimes the number can reach a dozen or more), and the contenders then embark on aggressive and intricate campaigns to win the respect of their fellows. Apart from frequent debates on various topics, these campaigns steer clear of mudslinging. A gnome is rarely impressed with a person's ego or ability to prove how much better they are than another person. Instead, these campaigns often turn into unorganized competitions where the various candidates embark on crusades to improve the village in creative and intelligent ways. These competitions nearly always benefit the village. The campaigns have no set time limit, but they rarely last more than a week. Gnomes do not actually vote for a burgomaster; they are selected by attrition as lesser candidates are forced to submit to a superior intellect and wit.

### ✱ Gnome Feats

#### Bend Spell [Metamagic]

Cover does little to reduce the effectiveness of your spells.

**Benefit:** Bend Spell reduces all benefits from cover for creatures affected by a spell. Target creatures gain no cover bonuses to Armor Class against a spell enhanced by the Bend Spell feat, and any saving throws made by creatures in the enhanced spell's area of effect gain no cover bonuses. This feat does not allow the spell to affect any target that would not normally be affected (for example, a target with total cover still cannot be affected).

A spell enhanced by Bend Spell uses up a slot one level higher than the spell's actual level.

#### Magically Adept [General]

Your innate magical abilities manifested in a slightly different manner than they do for most gnomes.

**Prerequisites:** Gnome, Intelligence 10+.

**Benefit:** The three 0 level spells

you can cast each day can be any three 0 level spells selected from the druid or the sorcerer/wizard spell list. You may select the same spell more than once; if you do, you can cast it multiple times each day. These spells are always arcane spells (even if they are druid spells), and spell failure penalties for armor apply. Once you select your three spells, you cannot change them.

**Normal:** A gnome with an Intelligence of 10 or higher may cast *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, and *prestidigitation*, each once per day as a 1st-level caster.

**Special:** This feat may only be taken as a 1st-level character.

#### Scathing Wit [General]

You are particularly gifted in the art of hurling insults.

**Benefit:** As a full round action, you can belittle and insult a single creature that can understand you and is within 30 feet. You and the target must make opposed Intimidate checks; if you win, the target is humiliated and suffers a

-1 morale penalty to attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws for a number of rounds equal to your Charisma bonus (minimum of 1 round). If you fail the opposed Intimidate check, the target shrugs the insults off. A particular target may only be subjected to your Scathing Wit once per day. This feat is an exceptional ability.

#### Wildspeak [General]

You are more talented than most gnomes at speaking with animals.

**Prerequisite:** Gnome, Charisma 15+.

**Benefit:** You can *speak with animals* as a 1st-level druid a number of times per day equal to your Charisma bonus (minimum of once per day). This spell-like ability works just as the spell, and allows speech with all animals. This replaces the gnome's standard *speak with animals* ability.

**Normal:** A gnome without this feat can only use this ability once per day, and even then can only speak with burrowing mammals.



### ✱ Good Gnomes Gone Bad

Although gnomes are, on the whole, kind, generous, and friendly, there do seem to be a fairly sizeable amount of evil gnomes in the world. Certainly, the percentage of evil gnomes is much greater than the percentages of evil halflings, dwarves, and elves (discounting the underground-dwelling offshoots, of course). An evil gnome is a terrible thing indeed, for such monsters never seem to lose their sense of humor. Their practical jokes merely turn from embarrassing and humiliating to downright deadly. One gnome exile, for example, has perfected a terrible recipe for lime pies that actually uses a variant strain of green slime that remains dormant (and lime flavored) until exposed to any sort of acid (such as stomach acid), at which time it quickly awakens and begins to eat away at whatever poor soul ingested it in the first place.

The majority of evil gnomes, it would seem, are a result of gnome society. There is little room in a gnome village for the stupid, and while many dumb gnomes are content to live out lives as blunt-hat wearing laborers, a large portion of them quickly learn to hate and envy their smarter (and better-liked) kin. These dull-witted gnomes often become fighters, barbarians, rogues, and rangers (who prefer to hunt smart gnomes over all else), and tend to move out of gnome societies early to make their fortunes breaking laws in other societies.

Interestingly enough, there also seems to be a large portion of evil gnomes who are incredibly intelligent. These gnomes include those who are brilliant enough that they often feel hampered, embarrassed, or even insulted by their merely quick-witted neighbors. These gnomes are usually spellcasters, often illusionists, and often prefer to remain in gnome societies and use their superior intellect and magical skills to hide their true personalities and schemes as they work to take full advantage of their environs. A surprising number of gnome villages are actually ruled by a hyper-intelligent gnome who manipulates politics from the shadows to fuel his own twisted plans and desires.

A burgomaster doesn't run a gnome village by himself, though. He has a board of advisors that consists of a group of nine gnome professors or teachers from local schools. An advisor serves a term of three years, after which he selects his successor (subject to the approval of the other advisors and the burgomaster) from a different local school. While the burgomaster is in charge of the day to day running of the village and peacekeeping, each of the advisors has a specific role. The alchemist, magical theorist, and craftsman guide and represent the various producers (inventors, farmers, smiths, wizards, and so on) in the village. The artist is responsible for organizing festivals and keeping the village a pleasant place to live. The engineer is responsible for public works like sanitation and repairs. The historian takes census and keeps track of town history. The mathematician acts as the town treasurer, the religious studies adviser as the town's spiritual leader, and finally, the master of literature is responsible for running the town hall and keeps town records organized and updated.

Despite this fairly rigid structure, gnome villages are not without their share of troublemakers and miscreants. These rabble-rousers are fairly mellow and only rarely cause problems in excess of brawling, graffiti, and petty thievery. Murder, rape, arson, and other felonious crimes are quite rare. When terrible crimes such as these do occur, the burgomaster assembles a squad of hand-picked investigators selected specifically for the nature of the crime and provides them with funds so they can quickly and efficiently capture the criminal. Gnome villages are small and since everyone knows each other, capturing the criminal is a fairly easy task. Gnomes believe that criminal behavior in their kin is caused by various forms of madness. A captured criminal is thus treated as a victim in many ways. The gnome is confined to his quarters for several months or even years while a team of gnome specialists studies him and attempts to cure him of his criminal ways using various forms of alchemical and magical treatments. In areas where dozens of gnome villages are located in close proximity to one another, an asylum might be constructed. Gnome

asylums are run by clerics and are located in secluded areas so that the occasional escapee doesn't have a convenient nearby populace to vent his aberrant behavior upon. Often, Enchantment magic is employed to keep the criminals docile and susceptible to personality reconstruction. Exile and death are never used by gnomes as punishment; exile simply foists the criminal off on someone else, and death is viewed as the lazy way out. To use an analogy, if a table has a crooked leg, you don't break it up and throw it away. You fix its leg so it can go on providing a useful service for many years to come.

As a result, deviant or criminal gnomes are loners or outcasts who dwell in non-gnome societies or wilderness regions. There are even tales of traitor gnomes who have joined with goblin or kobold tribes in order to aid their traditional enemies in battles against their own kin.

### ✱ Death & Burial

Gnomes learn to deal with death the hard way. The most difficult period of a gnome's childhood is invariably the death of her birth pet. Sometimes this tragedy occurs as a result of a terrible accident, but more often the birth pet simply dies of old age. This is often the child's first experience with death, and while the child's parents do little to prepare her for the inevitable event, they step in to offer explanations and support. This event often leaves the child emotionally scarred, but gnomes believe that dealing with death in this manner is the best way to prepare the child for the often brutal and sudden dangers that occur in life.

The death of a gnome is a solemn event and marks the only real time that religion plays a heavy hand in gnome society. If possible, the body of the deceased is returned to her parents or home town for a proper gnome funeral. Gnomes, being closely bonded to nature and burrowing animals, prefer to bury their dead rather than cremate or otherwise dispose of the bodies. A standard gnome funeral consists of a short eulogy given over the body of the deceased at her home by a local priest. The gnome's body is dressed and made up to appear as if she is merely sleeping; damage to the body is



repaired with strong alchemical glue and specialized resins. After the eulogy, the deceased is borne from the house on the shoulders of her friends while immediate family follows behind; all other gnomes in the village trail behind the family and sing hymns and prayers. An honor guard of several clerics or druids leads the procession, which winds through the village and eventually ends at the graveyard. Gnome graveyards are located well out of town in serene natural locations, more out of respect for the dead (allowing them to rest as close to nature as possible) than any real fear or superstitions regarding graveyards. At the graveyard, the gnomes select an empty plot and the grave itself is dug by the gnome's friends and family. The body is interred without a coffin or funeral wrap and then buried by the local priests. All gnome cemeteries have a caretaker—a solitary cleric or druid who lives alone in a shack near the graveyard and keeps an eye on things to insure that trouble (necromantic or otherwise) doesn't plague the graveyard. The caretaker does not attend funerals out of respect for the family and friends of the deceased.

The family and friends are expected to grieve for several weeks, after which time the deceased's will and possessions are arbitrated by the historian advisor to the burgomaster and closed. Gnomes have no real taboos against bringing back the dead via spells like *resurrection*, but such high level spells are often beyond the means and budget of most gnomes. More often, a particularly powerful or rich gnome family pays to have the deceased reincarnated by a local gnome druid. The reincarnated gnome is left to make her own choices in her new life; most stay with their friends and families for a few weeks before quietly slipping off into the woods to make a new life in the wild.

### ✧ Gnome Adventurers

With their strong magical, alchemical, and invention skills, gnomes are naturally drawn to the adventuring lifestyle. Rare is the gnome family who can't boast of at least one member who wandered off to join an adventuring group and has since become rich, famous, and powerful. Adventuring gnomes run the gamut

of character classes, but most have at least some training as illusionists. Non-gnome adventurers particularly value the gnome party member's skill with identifying potions and supplying the group with cheap alchemical devices. It's still standard for a gnome to graduate from school before going off to adventure, but it's not uncommon for a group of friends to set out looking for adventure the day after graduation. Such gnomes are rarely at home, but this doesn't mean that they don't miss friends and family left behind. An adventuring gnome often tries to come back home to visit and share the stories and wealth of his experiences with his family. As with other races, gnome adventurers rarely live to the age of retirement, but those gnomes who have had their fill of the dangerous lifestyle invariably return home to take up jobs as craftsmen, advisors, or professors. For this reason, many gnome villages often have an unusually high number of high-level citizens.

Evil gnomes who have managed to hide their crimes and deviant behavior often become adventurers. These sinister gnomes strike out on their own; when they do join groups it is under the guise of a friendly face. Many adventuring parties function for several years without knowing the true motivations or sinister goals of their gnome companion. Evil gnomes are territorial, and don't like sharing the spotlight with like-minded gnomes; as a result, parties of evil gnome adventurers are very rare.

Illusionist is the favored class for gnomes, but the bulk of adventuring gnomes are fighters or rogues who take a few levels of illusionist to round out their skills. There are also a fair number of gnome druid and ranger adventurers, as these classes are closely tied to nature. Evil gnome adventurers focus more strongly on the illusionist class, possibly because this class, more than any other, allows the gnome to hide his true nature. Gnomes are rarely barbarians; gnomes tend to be lawfully

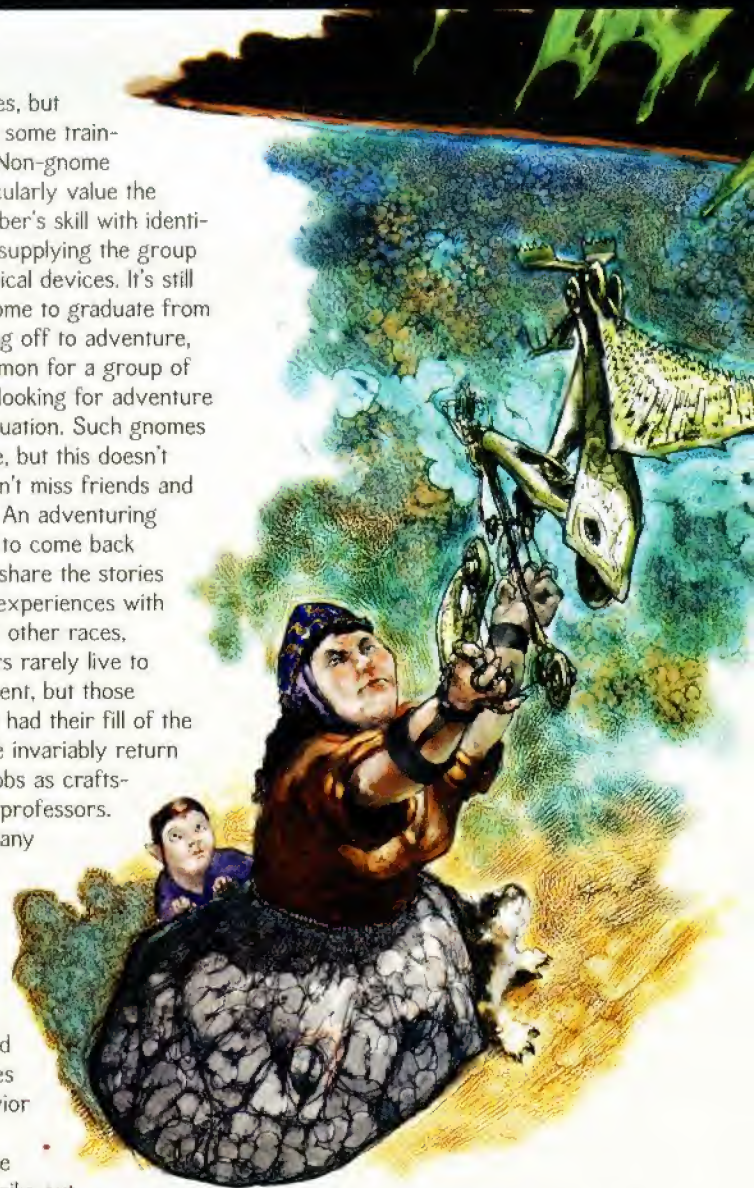
aligned, and their love of communities and the advantages of civilization tend to keep their barbaric urges to a minimum.

In any case, the gnome party member, with his illusions and natural alchemical skills, is a strong and valuable addition to any party of adventurers. However, the gnome's friends better be prepared to learn the joys and wonders of the classic gnome practical jokes first hand!

### ✧ Gnome Subraces

Several subraces exist in addition to the rock gnome, the most numerous subrace of gnomes, and each has a somewhat different outlook on life.

Forest gnomes are much more elusive than rock gnomes. They are nearly as numerous as rock gnomes, but their reclusive lifestyles make them much more rare. Forest gnomes are even more in tune with the natural world than the standard rock gnome, and their





villages are always at one with their environment. Druids are very common in forest gnome society, and they often serve as village leaders or advisors. As a result, forest gnomes are more spiritual people than rock gnomes, and they don't place as heavy an emphasis on education. They also tend to avoid flashy pursuits such as Alchemy and explosive inventions; they do nothing that might betray their cleverly hidden villages to casual passersby.

Svirfneblin, or deep gnomes, are much different than their surface-dwelling cousins. They build their homes in deep natural caverns, often hollowing out large stalactites and stalagmites to use as houses. Their world is a much more dangerous realm, and as a result, education in svirfneblin society isn't as important as martial and magical training. Hundreds of years spent in battle against terrifying underground races have honed their skills and magical knowledge to such an extent that the average svirfneblin is a much more dangerous foe than most other gnomes of equal experience.

A third gnome subrace, river gnomes, are isolationists and prefer the company of other river gnomes over all others. As a result, they rarely interact with other societies. Little is known about how river gnomes live, save that they prefer to live in shallow burrows dug into the banks of rivers deep in the wild, or in larger caverns located behind waterfalls. They are natural swimmers and can leap into action with startling grace.

The mysterious arcane gnomes are perhaps the least-known gnome subrace. Unlike other gnomes, arcane gnomes prefer to live alone in large cities where they spend their time researching magic. They are known to be both mischievous and foolhardy, but these qualities are tempered with a near boundless intellect. These gnomes have made great discoveries in arcane magic, mostly because they can't be bothered with safety when it gets in the way of progress. Arcane gnomes do not build cities. They prefer to live in peace with other races who build cities for them in small family units of up to a dozen members. Many boarding houses and inns have been forced to shut their doors to regular paying customers when a resident arcane gnome family grows too large.

Additional gnome subraces exist.

Some scholars theorize that gnomes are so closely bound to the natural world that a particularly large family of gnomes that dwells near an area of great natural power or beauty will, over the course of as little as one generation, develop strange new traits and skills that more closely match this new region. This theory does little to explain how arcane gnomes came to be, but adherents to this theory are quick to point out that arcane gnomes have eschewed the natural world and as a result, their traits may represent what it really and truly means to be a gnome without the "taint" of the world imprinted on their magical souls.

#### River Gnome Traits

River gnomes benefit from a number of different racial traits. These traits are in addition to the basic gnome traits, but in many instances, they replace standard gnome traits, as detailed below.

River gnomes use their *speak with animals* ability to speak with river dwelling animals such as fish, ducks, and otters; they cannot speak with burrowing mammals.

River gnomes have a swim speed of 20 ft. They gain a +8 racial bonus to any Swim check to perform a special action or avoid a hazard. They can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if rushed or threatened when swimming. River gnomes can use the run action while swimming, provided they swim in a straight line.

Although they do not possess any inborn ability to breathe water, a river

gnome can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to four times his Constitution score.

River gnomes are graceful and quick to spring into action and gain a +1 racial bonus to initiative checks.

River gnomes are not as magical as standard rock gnomes, and do not gain the ability to cast *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, and *prestidigitation*.

#### Arcane Gnome Traits

Arcane gnomes benefit from slightly different racial traits. These traits are in addition to the basic gnome traits.

Arcane gnomes are smart but brash; they are a little too eager to finish what they start and often take dangerous shortcuts with projects. They gain a +2 bonus to Intelligence and a -2 penalty to Wisdom; this is in addition to the standard +2 Constitution and -2 Strength all gnomes enjoy.

Use Magical Device is always a class skill for arcane gnomes; they have an inborn ability to understand and wield magic items.

Arcane gnomes have little skill or time for the natural world and cannot *speak with animals*. They still enjoy the companionship of animals, but these relationships are more like standard master-pet relationships in human societies.

An arcane gnome's favored class is wizard.







# THE LITTLE- LYMPICS

## Beating Gnomes at Their Own Games

by Robin D. Laws and Matthew Sernett  
illustrated by Mike Vilardi

Sooner or later, whether she likes it or not, every adventurer is going to find herself wanting something from a gnome. That thing might be an alchemical item, a potion, the use of an exotic mechanical device, information on a ghost-haunted barrow, or even the assistance of local gnome bravos on a raid against a monster's lair. How difficult this is depends on your attitude toward the wee fellows. People who like gnomes find them fun-loving, inquisitive, and amusing. Those who don't describe them as smug, nosy, and insufferable.

Whichever camp you belong to, you should know of the existence of a shortcut to the respect and admiration of this diminutive, blue-eyed race. Gnomes love games. Games appeal to their sense of curiosity, their devotion to surprise, and their love of intricacy. Gnomes delightedly seize on any opportunity to learn or play a new game, and they've adopted many of the games played by other races. Whether it's a gambling game played with cards or a strategy game conducted on a board, chances are that many of the world's best players are gnomes. Even gnomes who don't excel at these standard games often proudly claim that their people invented them, cheerfully dismissing any and all contrary evidence.



## The Spoils of Victory

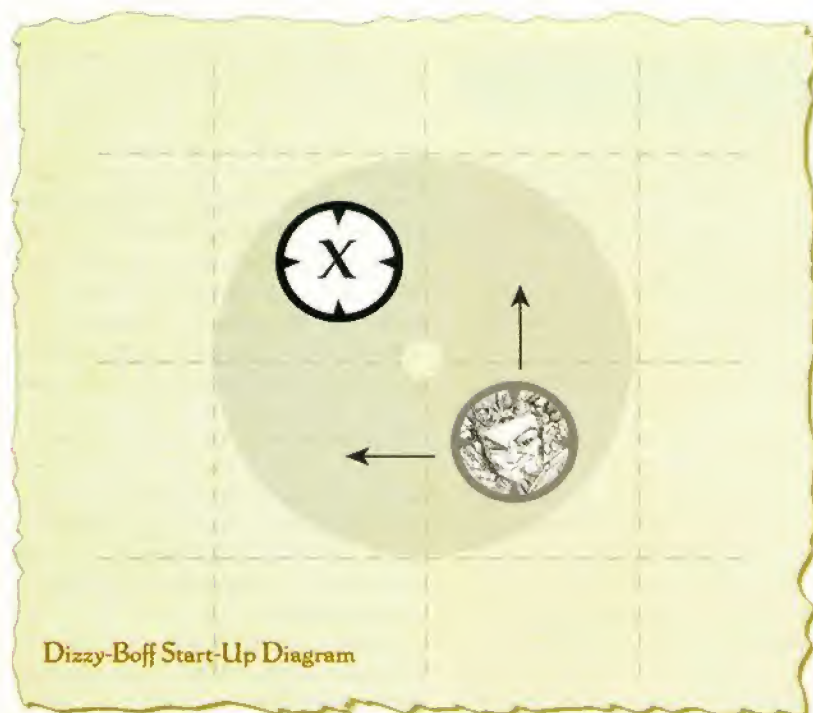
Although gnomes love to win, they are generally good sports. They know full well that their games are stacked against the other races and admire outsiders for having the gumption to even try them.

DMs might give PCs that participate in gnome jumping games a +1 circumstance bonus to all Charisma-based checks when dealing with gnomes that witnessed or heard of the PC's participation. This assumes the PC lost gracefully and with good cheer. Depending on how egregiously a losing PC acted, the DM might wish to assign a circumstance penalty of up to -4.

If the PC actually manages to win a gnome jumping game, gnomes generally react with shocked admiration. Such winners often find it impossible to pay for a drink and can find themselves surrounded by admiring gnome children begging them to tell exciting stories of adventurous exploits. DMs might wish to assign a circumstance bonus of +4 to all Charisma-based skill checks to influence gnomes who saw the PC win or heard of the PC's triumph.

This is not to say that gnomes have not invented any games. Far from it: the list of gnome games would fill a small tome. They tend to be complex, their rules lengthy and fit to bursting with special cases and hidden exceptions. Gnomes love rules, feeling that simple rules are for the less sophisticated minds of taller races. Anyone who has ever puzzled over a match of Rasumian pitch-drop or frogleg's spectral hoo-hah can attest to the difficulty an outsider faces in mastering a gnome strategy game.

Unlike the more sedentary dwarves, gnomes rarely turn down a chance to get up and run around. Although they play many games requiring nothing more strenuous than the occasional stretch after too long a sit, the most



distinctive gnome games are the tests of physical prowess played at festivals, weddings, markets, and holiday celebrations. Gnomes call this class of game the schelmbeng-karort-saalburort, a term that roughly translates as "the games of jumping and ducking and occasionally getting slightly injured." For reasons of space, we'll call these jumping games.

Jumping games usually pit multiple contestants, often competing separately, against an elaborate item of gnome engineering. Operated by chains, belts, and pulleys, these fast-moving machines whirl, click, and groan their way through a series of rapidly executed movements, against which the competitor must demonstrate superior speed, strength, reflexes—and, occasionally, a capacity for physical punishment. Needless to say, these games are designed to favor the squat gnome physique.

It should surprise no one to learn that trophy winners at gnome carnivals are almost always gnomes. That said, a sufficiently dedicated non-gnome, even a member of the tall races, can prevail and beat the little duffers at their own games. This article is dedicated to helping you do just that.

## Game Descriptions

Each game description begins with a cultural note explaining how the game fits into a gnome festival.

**Contest Type:** This explains who plays and when. In duels, a pair of contestants square off against one another; the winners go on to play the victors from other matches. In a race, three or more solo contestants compete to be the first to complete a task.

**Equipment:** This describes the machinery used and any other props or gear required to play.

**Game Play:** This provides a lengthier description of a typical match.

**Rules:** This entry tells you how to play a game-within-a-game.

**Winning:** This describes the game's victory conditions in simple terms.

## Dizzy-Boff

This popular game tames the violence of hand-to-hand combat by arming the contestants with padded sticks instead of weapons. It adds the speed and uncertainty gnome spectators crave by placing the competitors on a fast-spinning wheel.

### Dizzy-Boff Stick

| Simple Weapon    | Size        | Cost | Damage               | Critical | Weight | Type        |
|------------------|-------------|------|----------------------|----------|--------|-------------|
| Dizzy-Boff Stick | Medium-size | —    | 1d4/1d4 <sup>S</sup> | x2       | 3 lb.  | Bludgeoning |

<sup>S</sup>This weapon deals subdual damage rather than normal damage.



## Standard Bonuses and Penalties

Gnome jumping games are heavily skewed toward experienced contestants who happen to be shaped like gnomes.

Gnomes who grew up in gnome communities gain a +2 circumstance bonus to all Strength- and Dexterity-based skill checks listed in the game descriptions. Gnomes raised among other cultures boast the basic physique to win, but not the background, and gain only a +1 circumstance bonus.

Halflings, being creatures of a similar stature, also receive a +1 circumstance bonus, but elves, dwarves, half-elves, half-orcs, and humans all suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to all Strength- and Dexterity-based skill checks when playing gnome jumping games.

**Contest Type:** Duel, often played as part of an elimination tournament.

**Equipment:** A large circular wheel or table-top made of wood, ten feet in diameter, sits on an axis and is raised about a foot or two off the ground. During the contest, this wheel is spun by belts attached to a mill or by brawny gnomes pushing on spokes that are attached to the rim of the table.

Each contestant arms himself with a

gnome-sized quarterstaff, each end covered in thick padding made of rolled, quilted cotton, secured to the pole ends with glue. Contestants may protect themselves with leather armor and leather helmets, but in many circles this is regarded as prissy.

**Game Play:** Contestants clamber onto the wheel, each standing on a mark indicated with chalk. They stand equidistant from one another while a group of strong-backed young lads grabs onto spokes jutting out from the wheel and runs around until the disc is spinning at a high rate of speed. The referee blows a whistle, beginning the match. The two contestants then try to knock each other off the disk. Contestants may not touch one another, except with the padded staves.

**Rules:** Play begins after the whistle is blown. Initiative is rolled, and combat begins normally.

The padded quarterstaves are sized for gnomes, thus characters of Medium-size or larger cannot use both ends to attack. This is considered a hazard of the game for creatures larger than gnomes, and such contestants are never armed with full-sized quarterstaves. Dizzy-boff sticks only deal subdual damage. Contestants can strike for normal damage, but suffer a -4 penalty to attacks. Striking for normal damage is considered cheating and extremely poor sportsmanship; a contestant doing so is immediately disqualified. See the Dizzy Boff Stick sidebar for more details.

Each round of combat, on his initiative, each contestant must make a Balance check (DC 12). Failure indicates that the contestant is off-balance and cannot move that round. He loses his dexterity bonus to AC, and his opponent has a +2 bonus to attack him. A failure by 5 or more indicates the contestant has fallen off the wheel. Success indicates that the contestant can move normally and attempt to strike his opponent with the dizzy-boff stick. A successful hit forces the opponent to make a Balance check (DC 12). Failure indicates that the opponent falls off the wheel. Contestants cannot take 10 on their Balance checks.

Dizzy boff contestants can also move about on the wheel. Doing so is a 5-foot adjustment and provokes no attacks of opportunity. When both contestants are on the same side of the wheel, they both receive a +2 circumstance bonus to their Balance checks. The tactic of moving on the board is often used by those who are more confident of their combat abilities than their ability to balance on the spinning wheel. Gnomes often move onto the same side of the wheel as their non-gnome opponent to "give him an even chance" and make the contest last longer.

**Winning:** The first contestant who knocks his opponent off the wheel three times or who knocks his opponent unconscious, wins.

## Fortune's Fool

Fortune's fool is the jumping game most famous among non-gnomes. No game puts players' skill and dignity to a more exacting test than this one. It often serves as the climactic gaming event of a big festival.

The game's name refers to gnome folk wisdom, which holds that the cleverest and most agile gnome can always fall prey to the unexpected vagaries of fate. Gnomes see the game as a metaphor for life—the wise gnome remains humble, because at any moment, life can hurl a ripe, nasty tomato in his face. He also remains ever on alert, in the hopes that he can spot the worst surprises in time to duck.

**Contest Type:** Duel.

**Equipment:** The playing field for a game of fortune's fool consists of two main elements: a large wooden platform



Fortune's Fool Start-Up Diagram



with a moving floor and a whole lot of tomatoes.

The wooden platform is usually 30 feet long and 15 feet wide, bordered on all sides by 3-foot-high wooden walls to prevent participants and game balls from falling out. The platform's flooring is divided into many separate pieces, each about 6 inches wide. Each piece is mounted on a fulcrum running underneath the center of the platform. Spectators operate levers allowing them to tilt a section of floor up or down like a see-saw. The levers are used to tilt a piece of flooring so that it either ramps up, down, or stays even. This makes movement difficult and scatters the game balls.

**Game Play:** Two contestants face off against each other, trying to pick up brightly colored balls that roll about the fortune's fool platform. All the while, they attempt to avoid tomatoes thrown by spectators.

**Rules:** Contestants stand in the center square of one of the short walls and face off across the length of the platform. Spectators begin moving the levers, and ten greased balls are thrown into the playing area at the center two squares. Five balls are red; five are blue. Each contestant attempts to pick up all the balls of his assigned color. Contestants are not allowed to intentionally touch an opponent's ball, but they are allowed and encouraged to lever them into other parts of the game platform (see below). Contestants aren't allowed to touch their opponent, but they can try to make their opponent fall as described below.

Play begins when all the balls have been thrown onto the two center squares of the platform. Red balls are thrown in the center square in front of the player who is trying to pick up all the blue balls. Blue balls are thrown in the center square in front of the player who needs to pick up all the red balls. Determine the initial position of each of the balls by rolling a 1d8 for each and consulting the Grenadelike Weapons diagram on page 138 of the *Player's Handbook*. Assume the balls only move 5 feet. Each round, at the top of the initiative, roll 1d8 for each ball to determine its new position. If a ball is against a wall, treat any result that would move the ball into the wall as though the ball stayed in its position.

The two contestants roll initiative and move to collect balls in initiative order. Moving requires a Balance check (DC 12 +1 per 5 ft. moved). Failure results in the contestant being unable to move. He loses his dexterity bonus to AC and tomato throwers (described later) have a +2 bonus to attack him. A failure by 5 or more indicates the contestant has fallen prone in the square where the failure occurred, and he must spend an action standing up (picking up balls while prone is cheating). A contestant cannot move more than half-speed unless he is willing to suffer a -5 penalty to all Balance checks made during the move.

Contestants can also use the Jump skill to leap into their destination square. Thus, they need only make a DC 12 Balance check regardless of the distance moved. If a contestant leaps into a square close to one of the long walls, it causes some boards in the square across the center to abruptly rise. This causes balls in that section to move; roll for their new positions according to the rules presented above. An opponent in that square must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 12) or fall prone.

Contestants can also use the Tumble skill to move across the platform. In this case, the contestant makes a Tumble check (DC 15) instead of a Balance check. Failure of this check results in the contestant falling prone in the destination square.

If a contestant does not move, no Balance check is required. Contestants cannot take 10 on any of the skill checks required by the game because tomatoes are being hurled at them each round.

Picking up a greased ball is somewhat difficult, but it gets more difficult as contestants pick up more of their balls. The first two times a contestant picks up a greased ball, he must make a Dexterity check (DC 5) to grasp it. Picking up the third ball is a DC 8 Dexterity check. The fourth is DC 10, and picking up the fifth ball is DC 15.

Holding onto the balls isn't easy. Each time a contestant falls prone, he must make a Dexterity check (DC 15) or lose 1d6-1 balls. Dropped balls immediately scatter according to the rules presented above. In addition, each round after the first, spectators

## "Ho! Well Played, Tall One!"

Winning isn't everything at a gnome carnival, especially in a game of fortune's fool.

Contestants can win the crowd's applause and admiration through panache in the face of tomato hits and by dishing out tomato hits themselves. Contestants can throw tomatoes back at the crowd or at judges. Gnome social convention requires victims to take this in a spirit of jollity. A contestant might lose the contest but win more applause by throwing tomatoes back at the audience and by simply clowning around.

A PC wishing to do so should make a Perform (buffoonery) check or Charisma check (DC 20). Success indicates that, despite losing, the PC can reap the social benefits of winning the game of fortune's fool as described in the Benefits of Victory sidebar.

throw tomatoes at the contestants. This is a good way to involve players who are not otherwise participating in the game. Each round at the top of the initiative, four throwers are allowed to make ranged-touch attacks against the contestants. Success indicates that the contestant has been hit by a tomato. Each time a contestant is struck by a tomato, he must make a Concentration check (DC 10). Failure indicates he suffers a -1 cumulative circumstance penalty for each failed Concentration check to all Balance and Dexterity checks during that round. Spectators can throw tomatoes at whichever contestant they wish. Most of the time, the tomatoes are evenly distributed, but when someone holds five of their balls, all tomato attacks inevitably focus on him.

To make matters worse, a contestant holding no balls or a single ball can pick up a thrown tomato to throw it at his opponent. The ranged touch attack is made as normal, and the opponent suffers the usual penalties. This desperate tactic usually isn't employed unless the tomato-throwing contestant's opponent holds four or five balls.



Needless to say, this jumping game is a spectacle, and gnomes often come from miles around to watch and participate. Side bets come fast and furious during games of fortune's fool. Amateurs simply wager on a chosen player to win. Sophisticates bet on the number of tomatoes that will splatter a given competitor by the contest's end.

**Winning:** The contestant who has picked up all five of his balls wins if he can hold onto them for a full round.

## **The Glittering Path**

The gnome hero-god Hufurbian Mirrorbones once boasted of his privilege as a son of Garl Glittergold. It was good to be cleverer, faster, and better-looking than mere mortals, he said. Unfortunately for him, he said it within earshot of his father, who overheard him and decided to teach him a lesson. Garl Glittergold announced that Hufurbian's fabulous, jewel-encrusted hall, located in the home of the gods, would be given for a year to the winner of a special race, which he would adjudicate. Hufurbian, who perhaps was not as clever as he believed, saw this as a great gift, an opportunity to show off his superiority. He assumed the race would favor him, for he was the fastest gnome in all the land.

When the race day came, Garl arrived with a basket, from which he removed a clutch of burrowing rodents.

Each of these he dipped in a pot of liquid gold. He released them, and they scampered across the gods' realm, leaving glittering dribbles wherever they went. Garl gave the contestants spoons and told them the terms of the race. The first person to gather up every last drop of spilled gold would win temporary title to Hufurbian's house.

Hufurbian's rodent was especially inquisitive, and it wriggled its way throughout the gods' realm. It ran around the forge of the dwarven god Moradin, who had sworn to beat Hufurbian when next he saw him. It wriggled through a hole down into the realm of Wee Jas, who had threatened to lock Hufurbian in a diamond coffin. It shimmied up a tree, where Obad-Hai waited for Hufurbian with scratching branches and prickling thorns.

Hufurbian returned to his manor twenty hours after the race began, to find his cousin Elbow-Wick ensconced there as winner of the race. Hufurbian won the next year, after spending a cold twelve months studying the scurrying patterns of wriggling rodents. After that, he won the contest each year, and at least on race day, he was reminded of humility's benefits.

The myth, and the game that reenacts it, recognizes the need for modesty and a sense of humor in the face of life's unpredictability.

**Contest Type:** Race.

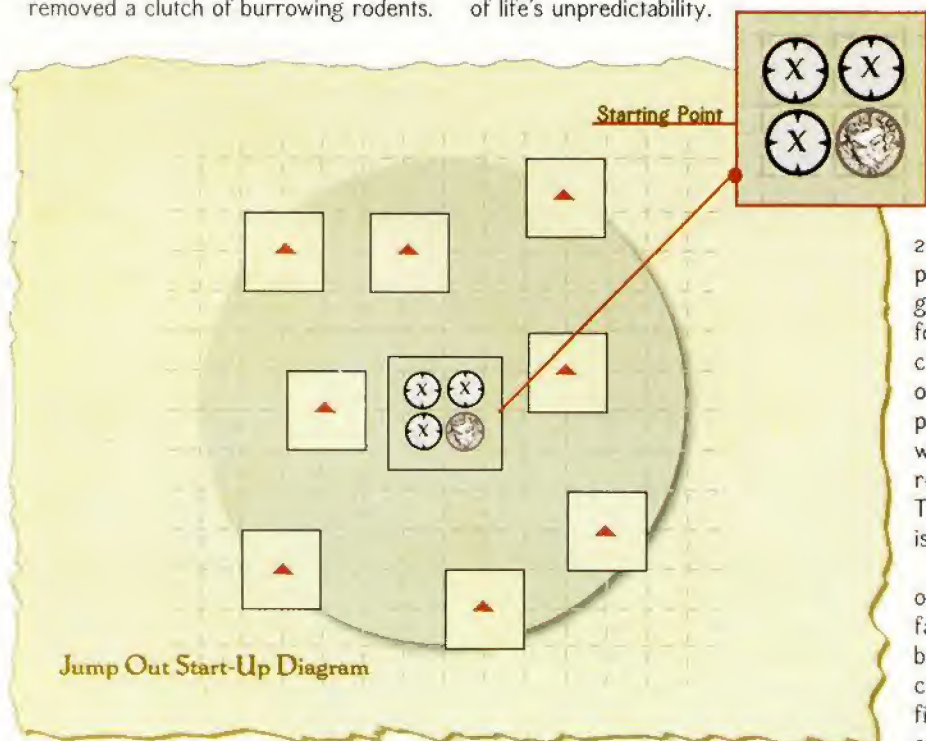
**Equipment:** Contest organizers release from their pens a clutch of burrowing rodents. In some areas, these are sand rats; in others, gophers; and in still others, armadillos. Before release, their feet are dipped in bright paint. Organizers follow the paths the animals leave in their wake, dropping berries in the path the animals' paint-dipped feet have marked. The berries are inedible, so they're unlikely to be devoured by forest creatures before the contest begins. Their tough outer skins are painted, too, in a different hue for each contestant.

**Game Play:** At the banging of a gong, each contestant follows his animal's path from the animal's release point, scooping up berries. It is illegal to disturb the berries of another contestant. Judges comb the woods, following the contestants and watching out for this infraction.

**Rules:** Every round, each contestant must make a Search check (or a Wilderness Lore check for characters with the Track feat) to follow the path of the rodent. While following the path, contestants must also make a Spot check (DC 14) once each round to spy one of the berries that is near his rodent's path.

The path becomes harder to find as the paint on the rodent gradually dries or is rubbed off as it runs. On the first round, the path is obvious to all contestants. On round two, a Search or Wilderness Lore check (DC 2) is required to stay on track and have a chance to Spot a berry. Berries are placed approximately 20 feet from one another along the path; creatures faster than gnomes gain no advantage. The Difficulty Class for the Search or Wilderness Lore check increases by +1 for every 20 ft., or round, of the race. Most glittering path races set their finishing line where the DC for the Search check reaches 11; characters without the Track feat can't follow tracks if the DC is greater than 10.

Contestants cannot take 10 on Spot or Search checks. A contestant that fails a Search check must remain behind to try again the next round. A character who fails a Spot check to find a berry can opt to remain behind and make a Spot check on the following





round before making a Search check to move on, but his competitors will be making their way to the finish line.

**Winning:** The first contestant to follow his path correctly and cross the finish line with at least three-quarters of the berries he could have found, wins.

## ⊕ Jump Out

This game, a variant of fortune's fool, was invented less than a century ago by the rogue Bewilderan. It caught on quickly and is now all the rage at winter festivals. Bewilderan created it as part of an elaborate scheme to separate a half-orc baron from his ill-gotten riches, but the game went on to gain an audience in its own right.

**Contest Type:** Race.

**Equipment:** The game requires a large patch of ice, usually a frozen pond or lake, which is then covered in snow. Hidden under the snow are a number of magic noise-making devices. These devices are often the prize possessions of a gnome community, and the loss of one is not taken lightly. After being activated, these devices make an easily distinguishable chiming noise when someone treads on the ice nearby. Traditional devices, like those invented by Bewilderan, take the shape of brass frogs.

**Game Play:** Before play begins, the organizers decree an ante. In poor communities, it might be as low as a few coppers, while well-heeled gnomes might play for hundreds of gold pieces.

Contestants begin in the middle of the patch of ice. Taking turns, they attempt to execute standing jumps out of the ice patch. If a contestant lands near a noisemaker, it makes a sound, which indicates he must move backward. Each time a contestant moves backward, he must add to the pot an amount at least equal to the ante.

**Rules:** The ice patch and noisemakers are set up before the participants arrive so that they can't figure out where the noisemakers are before the contest begins. Contestants are then lead, blindfolded and with cotton in their ears, to the center of the ice patch. They stand there while spectators throw more snow on the playing field to cover everyone's tracks. When everything is ready, spectators begin to throw snowballs at the competitors—

they do this for the duration of the game. This is the contestants' signal to remove their blindfolds and earplugs and begin taking turns jumping.

The DM should decide how many noisemakers there are and place them in a fair distribution pattern. Their placement should be kept secret from the players. Usually, there are enough noisemakers to make it challenging, but not so many that the contestants become frustrated or lose their shirts to the winner. Typical jump out games include up to eight participants on a 30-foot diameter patch of ice with six to eight noisemakers hidden under the snow. Noisemakers detect the presence of living creatures of at least Tiny size within 5 feet and chime so long as such a creature remains nearby. See the Jump-Out Noisemakers sidebar for a full description of these magic items. The diagram shows an example of a typical jump out set up.

On his turn, each contestant makes a Concentration check (DC 10) to keep his mind on the game under the onslaught of snowballs from the spectators. Failure indicates that the contestant suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to his Jump and Balance checks during his turn. He must then make a Balance check (DC 15), failure indicates he is unable to move and it is the next contestant's turn. If he succeeds, he can then make a Jump check to move into another square. All jumps are standing jumps. If the square is one of the 5-foot squares adjacent to the noisemaker, it chimes, and the contestant must step back 5 feet. All contestants can then make a Listen check (DC 15) to figure out where the noisemaker is located. This continues until someone escapes the ice patch.

**Winning:** As soon as a contestant exits the ice patch, he is declared the winner and the game ends. The winner gets the contents of the pot.

## ⊕ Using Gnome Games

Your players might well enjoy running their PCs through these games-within-the-game as is. The glittering path creates a sort of adventure, in its own abstract way. The gambling element of jump out might appeal without any extra effort on your part. For the other games, you'll find you can pique plenty of interest by making an attrac-

tive and valuable item the prize.

That said, these games can also serve as springboards for other story ideas. A game of dizzy-boff can provide a non-lethal forum for a PC to meet a future enemy, finding out just how tough he is. A fortune's fool match could get out of hand and turn into a full-contact sport. You could designate a particular place on the glittering path to trigger an encounter with a monster, wild animal, or to offer a clue to a new or ongoing mystery. A sinister NPC might rig the magical devices used in jump out to deal damage when characters land near them. Or the noisemakers might get stolen right under the PCs' noses, causing the gnomes to suspect the PCs of wrongdoing.

However you decide to introduce gnome jumping games into your campaign, remember that they offer more than fun minigames to play out during your D&D session. They also offer unique and exciting opportunities for roleplaying interaction with gnomes and are a great way to introduce your players to gnome culture. D

## Jump-Out Noisemakers

Originally invented for the jump-out game, *jump-out noisemakers* often find use in the very serious business of adventuring.

As a standard action, a noisemaker can be activated. An activated noisemaker chimes at a volume slightly louder than normal speech so long as a living, corporeal creature of Tiny size or larger remains within 5 feet. Adventurers find it useful to set these innocuous looking devices near their resting places as alarms. *Jump-out noisemakers* have also been found to be useful when fighting creatures that can render themselves invisible. Noisemakers can be deactivated as a standard action by holding it and speaking the command word.

**Caster Level:** 3rd;

**Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *alarm*;

**Market Price:** 2,700 gp;

**Cost to Create:** 1,300 gp + 108 XP.





# Abuse Your Illusions

## Using and Designing Illusion Spells

by Rich Redman ✧ illustrated by Dennis Cramer

**T**he *Player's Handbook* explains illusions and their subtypes in Chapter 10: Magic. If you haven't read that, go to it! That's the first step to learning about using and designing Illusion spells.

An Illusion spell is, in essence, a lie made manifest. It is an attempt to get observers to believe in something that doesn't exist or, in the case of shadows, something that only partially exists. Illusions, particularly figments and glamers, are tricks.

Illusionists must, somewhere in their character, have a roguish streak, for they prefer to mislead, trick, confuse, and befuddle their opponents over blasting them to cinders with a *fireball* or crushing them beneath a summoned creature. Keep this in mind when using Illusion spells or designing new spells of the Illusion school. Your illusionist

character is a liar and knows it—he believes deception is the best way to defeat foes and diffuse dangerous situations. Lying is more than a way of life for him; it's an art.

### ✧ USING ILLUSION SPELLS

Shadows, phantasms, and patterns are relatively easy to use and adjudicate. They have clear-cut effects. Figments and glamers, on the other hand, require the players' belief. If players aren't gulled by an illusion, they might have their characters interact with the illusion in ways meant to provoke a Will saving throw. They might be subtle about it or blatant. A DM has to accept that her characters, whether creatures or NPCs, would fall for a player character's illusion, or she'll have them start making Will saving throws immediately.

Here are some guidelines for using Illusion spells effectively:

**Be subtle and use them sparingly.** Illusionists strive to conceal their specialization. Once characters realize they're facing illusions, they become skeptical. They start searching empty rooms for hidden traps and treasure. They pepper opponents with missiles and observe the results before expending more powerful resources. Monsters and NPCs become more aggressive in their actions against the party after the first illusion because they assume some of the threats they face aren't real.

Subtle illusions are harder to notice, and therefore give fewer opportunities to disbelieve. Subtle illusions change the bare minimum necessary to accomplish their task. For instance, no one believes the ceiling fell just in time to cut off pursuit of the villain, unless they hear



and feel the shockwave and see and smell the dust. They might believe a *silent image* of the villain flying away through an open window, however.

Ask yourself "Would I believe this?" If you would, then it's probably a subtle, tricky illusion. If not, find some other way to accomplish the same thing.

**Give them what they expect.** In certain situations, people expect to see certain things. Characters who run around a corner and see the subject of their chase on the other side of a chasm expect to also see a bridge (unless their subject demonstrates an ability to fly). An illusionist hiding behind a rock or a pillar could use *minor image* to create the illusion of both the bridge and the subject of the chase. Characters who run into a chamber with a door sized for Medium-sized beings do not expect to see a Huge monster, and they are likely to assume an illusion, unless the illusionist also provides a way for a creature that size to be in the room.

**Minimize interaction.** Every interaction with an illusion is another opportunity to succeed at a Will saving throw. Hiding a spiked ceiling trap with a *silent image* might lead a party to enter a room without searching for traps first. An illusory bridge across a chasm might catch one party member, if the party doesn't already suspect an illusionist at work. Illusory melee opponents buy a round or two of distraction, particularly against fighters and others with relatively poor Will saving throws. Don't expect such illusions to occupy characters for long.

**Don't neglect other senses.** Thanks to David Copperfield and other professional illusionists, we tend to think of illusions as involving things we see or don't see. The hand might be quicker than the eye, but that doesn't mean Illusion spells don't affect scent, hearing, taste, or touch.

Smell can have a powerful effect, for instance, and the lack of a particular smell might give away the presence of an illusion. Troglydtes and otyughs have their own unique stench. Making that smell waft from under a door can make characters hesitate before opening it. Seeing an otyugh but not smelling it, on the other hand, is a clue that the monster is merely an illusion.

Auditory illusions, like *ghost sound*,

can mask characters' approach, or make observers believe that a larger party lurks in the shadows or trees. The sound of whispers could lead characters to open a door and trigger an unsuspected trap while the spellcaster waits elsewhere.

**Pull a fast one.** Once everyone knows they face an illusionist, stop using illusions—then start again. When characters never know whether the ogre is real or a *major image*, DMs build suspense. When monsters and NPCs occasionally face real threats, they can't be sure what will happen next and must act more cautiously, buying time for the party.

**Know which creatures are susceptible and which immune.** Illusionists know the limitations of their school. They won't bother using figments and glamers on creatures that can see right through them. Dragons, like other creatures with blindsight, ignore *invisibility*. Mindless creatures ignore many illusions. Clerics, monks, sorcerers, and wizards all have good Will saving throw modifiers and have a better chance to disbelieve Illusion spells. It's better to save the illusions for barbarians, fighters, paladins, and rangers.

## ★ DESIGNING ILLUSION SPELLS

Start simple and work your way up. Other schools, such as Evocation, have much more obvious checks and balances to make sure you design a good spell, and it's easier to make comparisons. The Illusion school has a wide range of subtypes with very different game effects. This, combined with the fact that there isn't a spell for each subtype at all levels, makes it difficult to determine a newly created spell's power and fairness.

Following the advice below, begin with a 0- or 1st-level spell. This will give you a good idea of all the questions and difficulties that might crop up when designing a higher-level Illusion spell. When you're satisfied that it really is a 0-level (or 1st-level) spell, that you filled in the necessary information, and that the text answers the most common questions, move on to something higher level and more complicated.

**Avoid repetition.** Before designing any new spell, Illusion or otherwise, check and see if an existing spell

## Illusions and Saving Throws

Players and their characters cannot simply state a desire to disbelieve an Illusion spell. Many don't allow saves unless a character interacts with them. For instance, *silent image* can create the illusion of an orc guard. The illusionist can even move the image and have it threaten characters with its weapon. There's no saving throw against it, however, unless characters actually interact with it. The interaction could be trying to Tumble past it, trying to attack it, or trying to pick its pockets. At that point, the acting character gets a Will saving throw against the illusion. Sneaking around it is avoiding the illusion, not interacting with it, and shouldn't allow a saving throw.

already does what you want. Familiarize yourself with the spells already available. Look through the school descriptions in Chapter 10: Magic of the *Player's Handbook* to see where you might find such a spell. *Major image*, *minor image*, *permanent image*, *persistent image*, *programmed image*, and *silent image* cover most needs for figments, for instance. Don't bother designing something that repeats existing material.

Filling holes in an existing spell list is a good way to avoid repetition. Look at the sidebar, Illusion Spells by Subtype and Level. You can see, for instance, that there are no figments over level 6. So there are holes for figments at levels 7, 8, and 9. The spells that appear later in this article fill some holes, providing Illusion spells of specific subgroups at levels where no such spell already existed.

Think carefully about your spell. For instance, a phantasm similar to *weird* might seem like a good idea if it did damage (half damage on a successful save); rather than killed characters outright (with damage on a successful save). However, that's little different than *fireball*. Some wizards who specialize in illusions might desire such a spell, but in most cases *fireball* and other damaging spells are already better choices.

**Balance power with spell level.** Look at existing spells of the same level to get an idea of the power of such spells. "Power" means things like range, number of individuals affected or area covered, duration, amount of damage, and other specific qualities of the spells. Look at spells within the same subgroup



above and below your chosen level, and try to design something that falls between them. For instance, suppose a 4th-level spell does 1d6 points of damage plus 1 point per level, up to a maximum of +10 points, to a single target. Then suppose a 6th-level spell does 1d6 points of damage per level, up to a maximum of 15d6 to multiple targets. A 5th-level spell of the same school might do 1d6 points of damage plus 1 point per level, up to a maximum of +15 points, to multiple targets.

Look at divine spells, too, for similar effects and power at a given spell level. Earmark Table 3-22: Maximum Damage for Arcane Spells in Chapter 3: Running the Game of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* if you're designing a spell that will do damage.

**Use metamagic feats to find a spell's level.** You can use metamagic feats to help you figure out a spell's level. For instance, if you want an Illusion spell that lasts longer than an existing Illusion spell, apply the Extend Spell feat until the existing spell lasts as long as you desire. That tells you what level spell slot the existing spell would have to occupy if it lasted that long. Assume

that's the base level for your new spell, then determine if it should be higher or lower depending on its limitations and additional effects.

## CHOOSING AN ILLUSION SUBGROUP

**Figments:** Figments cannot produce real effects, nor can they change things that already exist. If you want to create the illusion of a soft breeze, birdcalls, the aroma of a fresh-baked pie, or the sight of a loved one, you probably want a figment. Remember that everyone within range perceives the same thing. Everyone smells the same type of fresh-baked pie, for instance, and reacts appropriately for them; a fresh-baked meat pie attracts carnivores and repels herbivores.

**Glamers:** Glamers can't produce real effects, but they can change things that already exist. That's the chief difference between a figment and a glamer. If you want solid wood to feel rotten, birdcalls to sound like the shrieks of the damned, an otyugh to smell like perfume, or to disguise yourself, you probably want a glamer. As with figments, everyone within

range perceives the same thing and reacts appropriately.

**Patterns:** Patterns, like figments and glamers, produce sensory impressions, and everyone within range perceives the same thing. Patterns contain an additional, mind-affecting element, and they can cause real, physiological effects. All patterns are mind-affecting spells. While everyone sees a *color spray*, only some of those within the cone actually deal with its effects. Note that a particular sense is required for patterns to have an effect. Sightless creatures ignore *color spray*, for instance. If you want multiple subjects to be affected by what they see, and you don't care if everyone perceives it happening, pattern might be a good choice.

**Phantasms:** Phantasms can only be perceived by caster and target, unlike the previous three subgroups. The impression created by a phantasm exists only in the mind and is personalized for everyone perceiving it. All phantasms are, therefore, mind-affecting spells. *Nightmare* is a good example of such a phantasm. If you want to keep your actions a secret from everyone but your subjects, phantasm is a good choice, whether you want to frighten or to deliver a message.

**Shadows:** Shadows are quasi-real, drawing on energy from the Plane of Shadow. Because they are at least partially real, they can have real effects. If you want to cause physical damage, bind or entangle someone, or create an obstacle, shadow is a good choice.

## NEW ILLUSION SPELLS

**Phantasmal Whisperer**  
Illusion (Phantasm) [Language Dependent]  
**Level:** Brd0, Sor/Wiz0  
**Components:** V, S  
**Casting Time:** Minimum 1 action (see text)  
**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)  
**Target:** One allied creature  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Saving Throw:** Will negates (see text)  
**Spell Resistance:** Yes

A message of a length you set races to your intended recipient. You can send any length message, but the longer your message the longer your casting time. You need not mouth the words or whisper, so there is no chance for spies to read lips. Provided your recipient

## ILLUSION SPELLS BY SUBTYPE AND LEVEL

| SPELL TYPE AND NAME      | LEVEL                                  | SPELL TYPE AND NAME               | LEVEL                         |
|--------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>FIGMENTS</b>          |  | <b>SHADOW SPELLS</b>              |                               |
| <i>Ghost sound</i>       | Brd0, Sor/Wiz0                         | <i>Greater shadow conjuration</i> | Sor/Wiz5                      |
| <i>Illusory wall</i>     | Sor/Wiz4                               | <i>Greater shadow evocation</i>   | Sor/Wiz6                      |
| <i>Permanent image</i>   | Brd6, Sor/Wiz6                         | <i>Project image</i>              | Brd6, Sor/Wiz6                |
| <i>Persistent image</i>  | Brd5, Sor/Wiz5                         | <i>Shades</i>                     | Sor/Wiz6                      |
| <i>Programmed image</i>  | Brd6, Sor/Wiz6                         | <i>Shadow conjuration</i>         | Sor/Wiz4                      |
| <i>Major image</i>       | Brd3, Sor/Wiz3                         | <i>Shadow evocation</i>           | Sor/Wiz5                      |
| <i>Minor image</i>       | Brd2, Sor/Wiz2                         | <i>Shadow walk</i>                | Sor/Wiz7                      |
| <i>Mirror image</i>      | Brd2, Sor/Wiz2                         | <i>Simulacrum</i>                 | Sor/Wiz7                      |
| <i>Ventriloquism</i>     | Brd1, Sor/Wiz1                         |                                   |                               |
| <i>Silent image</i>      | Brd1, Sor/Wiz1                         |                                   |                               |
| <b>FIGMENT/GLAMERS</b>   |  | <b>GLAMERS</b>                    |                               |
| <i>Mislead</i>           | Brd5, Luck6,<br>Sor/Wiz6,<br>Trickery6 | <i>Blur</i>                       | Brd 2, Sor/Wiz2               |
|                          |  | <i>Change self</i>                | Sor/Wiz1, Trickery1           |
|                          |  | <i>Displacement</i>               | Brd3, Sor/Wiz3                |
|                          |  | <i>False vision</i>               | Brd5, Sor/Wiz5,<br>Trickery5  |
|                          |  | <i>Hallucinatory terrain</i>      | Brd4, Sor/Wiz4                |
|                          |  | <i>Improved invisibility</i>      | Brd4, Sor/Wiz4                |
|                          |  | <i>Invisibility</i>               | Brd 2, Sor/Wiz2,<br>Trickery2 |
| <b>PATTERNS</b>          |  | <i>Invisibility sphere</i>        | Brd3, Sor/Wiz3                |
| <i>Color spray</i>       | Sor/Wiz1                               | <i>Leomund's trap</i>             | Sor/Wiz2                      |
| <i>Hypnotic pattern</i>  | Brd2, Sor/Wiz2                         | <i>Magic mouth</i>                | Brd 2, Sor/Wiz2               |
| <i>Rainbow pattern</i>   | Brd4, Sor/Wiz4                         | <i>Mass invisibility</i>          | Sor/Wiz7                      |
| <b>PHANTASMS</b>         |  | <i>Mirage arcana</i>              | Brd3, Sor/Wiz5                |
| <i>Dream</i>             | Brd5, Sor/Wiz5                         | <i>Misdirection</i>               | Brd 2, Sor/Wiz2               |
| <i>Illusory script</i>   | Brd3, Sor/Wiz3                         | <i>Nystul's magic aura</i>        | Magici, Sor/Wiz1              |
| <i>Nightmare</i>         | Brd5, Sor/Wiz5                         | <i>Nystul's undetectable aura</i> | Magici, Sor/Wiz1              |
| <i>Phantasmal killer</i> | Sor/Wiz4                               | <i>Screen</i>                     | Sor/Wiz8, Trickery7           |
| <i>Weird</i>             | Sor/Wiz9                               | <i>Seeming</i>                    | Sor/Wiz5                      |
|                          |  | <i>Silence</i>                    | Brd2, Clr2                    |
|                          |  | <i>Veil</i>                       | Brd6, Sor/Wiz6                |



understands your language, she hears it clearly on spell completion, regardless of the noise in the room. No one else understands or even hears the message. Magical silence, 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal (or a thin sheet of lead), or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks the spell. The message, however, does not have to travel in a straight line. It can circumvent a barrier if there is an open path between you and the subject, and if the path's entire length lies within the spell's range.

### ✧ **Phantasmal Assailants**

Illusion (Phantom)  
[Fear, Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Sor/Wiz2

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target:** One living creature

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** Will disbelief, then Fortitude half

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You create phantasmal images of fearsome creatures from the subject's nightmares. Only the spell's subject can see the phantasmal assailants; you see only shadowy shapes. The subject first

gets a Will saving throw to recognize that the images are unreal. Success indicates that the spell fails. If the subject fails the saving throw, the phantasms touch him, and he must succeed at a Fortitude save or take 1d6+1 points of Wisdom damage. A successful Fortitude save halves the damage. Regardless of the success of the Fortitude save, the target is also shaken, suffering a -2 morale penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws, for 1 round per caster level.

If the subject of a *phantasmal assailants* spell succeeds in disbelieving and he is wearing a *helm of telepathy*, the spell can be turned upon you. You must then disbelieve or suffer their fearsome attack.

### ✧ **Shadow Binding**

Illusion (Shadow)

**Level:** Sor/Wiz3

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Area:** 10-ft.-radius burst

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will partial (see text)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

You cause a multitude of ribbonlike shadows to instantaneously explode outward from the target point. Creatures in the area that fail their save take 2 points of temporary Strength damage, are dazed for 1 round, and are entangled. An entangled creature suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls, suffers a -4 penalty to effective Dexterity, and can't move. An entangled character who attempts to cast a spell must make a successful Concentration check (DC 15) or lose the spell. She can break free and move half her normal speed by using a full-round action to make a Strength check or an Escape Artist check (DC 20). Creatures that succeed at their Will saving throws do not take the Strength damage but are entangled. They must make a successful Concentration check to cast spells (DC 5 plus the level of the spell), losing the spell if the caster fails the check. Similarly, they can break free by using a full-round action to make a Strength check or an Escape Artist check (DC 5). Once free, such creatures can move normally.

*Material Component:* A few links of iron chain.

### ✧ **Shadow Radiance**

Illusion (Shadow)

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**Level:** Sor/Wiz4

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./caster level)

**Area:** 25-ft. + 5 ft./level radius burst

**Duration:** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will disbelief (if interacted with)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell creates an intensifying illusion of bright light that affects all creatures within the area. Sightless creatures are not affected by *solar radiance*. Those who fail their saving throws see a burst of bright light on the first round. The light blinds them for 1 round. On the next round and for the rest of the spell's duration, the affected creatures see the light increase in intensity. If they suffer penalties in bright light, they suffer them for the duration of their exposure to this light. Additionally, they are dazzled while in the area of the spell. A dazzled creature suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls. Those who escape the area of solar radiance completely recover within one round. Those who make their saves and those outside the initial burst see only the equivalent of torchlight emanating from the center of the area. Solar radiance cannot move once cast.

**Material Component:** A flame at least the size of a torch.

### Illusory Feast

Illusion (Pattern) [Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 5

**Components:** V, S, M

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Long (400 ft. + 40 ft./level)

**Area:** 40-ft.-radius spread

**Duration:** Concentration + 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Tantalizing food and drink appears, causing creatures in the area to stop what they are doing and eat. A creature in the area that fails its save stops its current activities, drops held or carried items, and begins consuming the illusory food and drink. The food looks, feels, smells, tastes, and even sounds real to the affected creature, and it appears to be whatever kind of food the creature prefers. The creature is considered dazed and takes no actions (but defends itself normally). Thus, a fighter affected by this spell cannot run away or attack

but suffers no penalties when attacked. An attack on an affected creature frees it from the spell immediately, but it must make another Will saving throw each round that it remains within the spell's area. Sightless creatures are affected by this spell due to its affect on all the senses. Creatures that do not eat are unaffected by this spell.

**Material Component:** A pinch of trail rations.

### Illusory Pit

Illusion (Phantasm)

[Fear, Mind-Affecting]

**Level:** Sor/Wiz6

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 round

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./caster level)

**Area:** 10-ft. cube/level

**Duration:** Concentration + 1 round/level

**Saving Throw:** Will partial (see text)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

Creatures entering or within the area must make a Will save or believe the floor on which they stand has become the wall of a bottomless pit. Those who succeed in their saving throw suffer a mild case of vertigo and are stunned for 1 round. Those who fail their saving throw fall prone and take no other action but clawing desperately at the floor, trying to stop their "fall." An attack on an affected creature frees it from the belief it is falling, but leaves it stunned for 1 round. When the duration ends, creatures that believed they were falling are stunned for 1 round. Flying creatures who make their Will saving throw are unaffected by this spell, and those that fail are stunned for 1 round.

### Shifting Paths

Illusion (Figment, Glamer)

**Level:** Drd7, Sor/Wiz8

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 10 minutes

**Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./caster level)

**Area:** 1-mile radius plus 1 mile per caster level

**Duration:** 1 hour/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This spell simultaneously hides a path or road specified by you (as *improved invisibility*, a glamer) while creating an

illusory path (a figment), much as *mislead* hides you while providing an illusory double. The illusory path starts at a point chosen by the caster, provided the point is within the range limitations. The illusory path continues to the limit of the spell's area, where it ends abruptly. The illusory path avoids obstacles and provides no bridges, stairs, ladders, ramps, or other methods of traversing such obstacles. There is no way to force the illusory path to lead over a cliff or across a river more than 4-feet deep.

Those who fail their Will saving throws struggle along the illusory path. If vegetation or rough terrain slows their progress, they believe the path slopes enough to justify the reduced speed. Those who make their Will saving throws see both paths, but the illusory path is shadowy and obviously unreal.

### Stalking Spell

Illusion (Glamour)

**Level:** Sor/Wizg

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 10 minutes

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** You or creature touched


**Duration:** 1 hour/level (D)

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless)

**Spell Resistance:** No

This powerful glamer conceals the subject from all senses except touch and taste. Items dropped or put down by an invisible creature become visible; items picked up disappear if tucked into the clothing or pouches worn by the creature. Light, however, never becomes invisible, although a source of light can become so (thus, the effect is that of a light with no visible source). Any part of an item that the subject carries but that extends more than 10 feet from it becomes visible, such as a trailing rope. The subject radiates silence in a 5-foot-diameter emanation centered on the subject. Tremorsense cannot detect subjects of this spell. Subjects emit no scent.

Certain other conditions can render the recipient detectable (such as stepping in a puddle), but attacking does not end the spell. A *stalking spell* renders the recipient immune to *faerie fire*, *glitterdust* does not cling, and *see invisibility* does not allow detection of the recipient, but *true seeing* does.

See Table 8-8: Attack Roll Modifiers, on page 132 of the *Player's Handbook*, for the effects of invisibility on combat. 



## Bazaar of the Bizarre

# GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

by Jonathan Richards

and Brian Dunnell

illustrated by Jeff Carlisle



Every race creates magic items to suit their particular culture, climate, terrain, and situation. Gnomes are no different. Between rock gnomes, forest gnomes, and svirfneblin, gnomes have created hundreds of unique items based on their specialized needs.

Gnomes must constantly deal with kobolds and goblins, their racial enemies, and svirfneblin must also combat evil subterranean creatures such as drow and mind flayers; as a result, they have developed magic items that help them in their battles against such foes. Gnomes create other magic items based on their fascination with illusions and their affinity for small, burrowing animals. Still others are specialized for use by gnome arcane spellcasters, who typically avoid hand-to-hand combat whenever possible. The gnome knack for creating distinctive magic items is becoming well known in adventuring circles, and people of many races have begun adapting various gnome designs for their use.

### BADGER ARMOR

*Badger armor* is +1 half-plate typically designed with a badger motif. Once per day as a standard action, the wearer of this armor can utter the command word and polymorph into a badger or dire badger as per *polymorph self* cast by a 7th-level sorcerer. Upon polymorphing, the wearer of the armor regains lost hit points as if he had rested for a day (1 hit point per level). While in badger or dire



badger form, the wearer can speak with badgers and dire badgers as per the *Speak with Animals* spell.

**Caster Level:** 9th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *polymorph self*, *Speak with Animals*; **Market Price:** 9,562 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,781 gp + 382 XP.

### WARFOX HARNESS

Many forest gnomes have befriended the foxes that share their wilderness environment. Some gnome wizards and sorcerers have taken foxes as their familiars, and a few have even gone so far as to design and develop a magic item allowing their fox partners to be transformed into beasts of war.

A *warfox harness* is a simple leather collar that can be worn by a normal-sized fox, dog, or wolf. While worn by a creature in a normal-sized fox, wolf, or dog form, it grants the creature a +1 deflection bonus to AC.

Upon activation by a user touching the collar, a creature in a normal-sized fox, wolf, or dog form wearing the collar polymorphs into a dire fox as per the *polymorph other* spell cast by a 7th-level sorcerer. In addition, the collar transforms into a complete riding harness and military saddle (which still grants the dire fox a +1 deflection bonus). Creatures unwilling to be transformed must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) to resist.

The dire fox can then be ridden into battle or used as a mount for travel (assuming the animal allows it or is forced to allow it). The transformation lasts until the saddle is removed or until a creature touching the saddle speaks the command word. Thus, a transformed creature with the ability to speak could transform itself to and

from dire fox form.

**Caster Level:** 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *polymorph other*, *shield of faith*; **Market Price:** 36,280 gp; **Cost to Create:** 18,140 gp + 1,451 XP; **Weight:** — (collar) or 8 lb. (military saddle).

### MUSHROOM CAP

This unusual-looking helmet is a favorite of surface and deep gnomes alike. The wearer of a *mushroom cap* can utter the command word and activate its power as a standard action to transform himself into a Small mushroom. The closest inspection cannot reveal that the mushroom is anything other than natural. While in mushroom form, the wearer can still see and hear everything going on around him; the magical effect is similar to that of the *tree shape* spell, with the obvious difference of the wearer's mushroom appearance. While in mushroom form, the wearer retains his own hit points and saves and gains a +5 natural armor bonus to his AC and a +1 size bonus to his AC for being Small, but he is immobile and has an effective Dexterity score of 1. While in mushroom form, the wearer is immune to critical hits. He can return to his normal form at will as a free action.

The *svirfneblin* in particular find the mushroom shape to be an innocuous one, as giant fungi are plentiful in the Underdark. Several deep gnomes wearing *mushroom caps* can form a small grove of the subterranean fungus, or a single wearer can blend in with natural fungi.

**Caster Level:** 4th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *tree shape*; **Market Price:** 10,800 gp; **Cost to Create:** 5,400 gp + 432 XP; **Weight:** 3 lb.



### Foxes, Dire Foxes, and Fox Familiars

**DIRE FOX:** CR 2; Medium-size animal; HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d6+3, bite); SQ scent; Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

**Skills:** Hide +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +8, Spot +5, Swim +5.

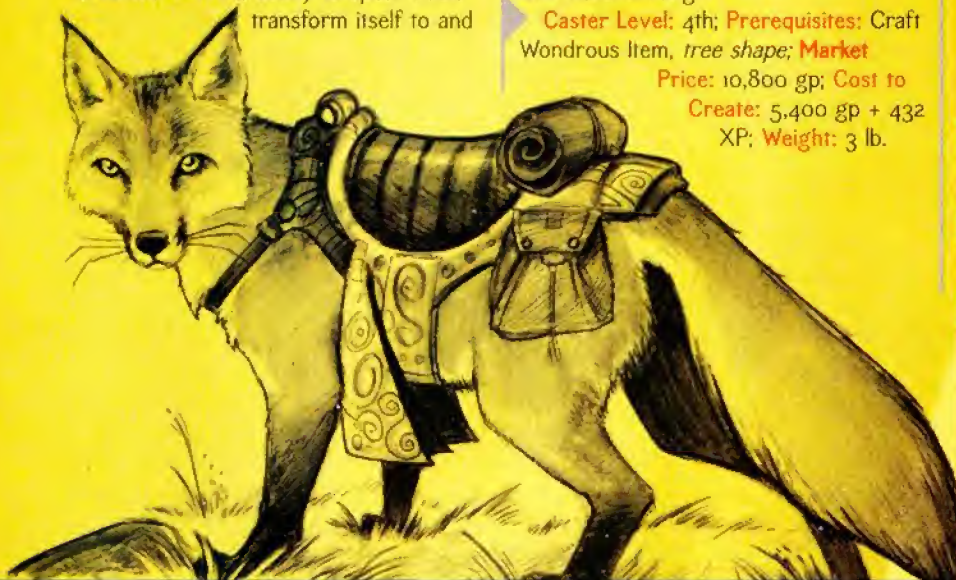
**Fox:** CR 1/4; Small animal; HD 1/2 d8; hp 2; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +4 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d4, bite); SQ scent; Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 19, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7.

**Skills:** Hide +12, Listen +5, Move Silently +9, Spot +5, Swim +3.

**FOX FAMILIAR:** Master gains a +2 bonus to Reflex saves.

### Faux Fox

Astute readers might remember that statistics for the fox were presented in issue #280. The statistics above correct some errors in that version of the fox and thus supercede it.







## NEUROSHIELD HELM

The svirfneblin devised *neuroshield helms* to protect them from the mind blasts of illithids. A *neuroshield helm* has three smooth, opaque gems embedded in it, one at the front and one at each temple. The gems act as storage receptacles for the mind flayers' psionic energies. If the wearer of a *neuroshield helm* is mind blasted by an illithid, she is completely unaffected, as the psionic energy that would have affected her is diverted and stored in one of the oval gems.

Once all three of the gems hold mind blast energy, the wearer can shoot out a mind blast as a standard action. This mindblast is identical in all respects to that projected by an average mind flayer. Note that once all three gems hold a "charge," the *neuroshield helm* cannot protect the wearer from further mind blasts until the psionic energy is discharged from the gems by shooting a mind blast.

**Caster Level:** 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *spell immunity*; **Market Price:** 46,200 gp; **Cost to Create:** 23,100 gp + 1,848 XP; **Weight:** 3 lb.

## BLASTING PELLETS

Blasting pellets look like ball bearings or stones and come in bags. Used like caltrops, one bag of these alchemical items is enough to cover an area 5 feet square. Each



round that a creature moves more than half speed through an area covered in blasting pellets (or spends a round fighting while standing in such an area), it must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) to avoid breaking one. Breaking one pellet sets off a chain reaction among the others and they all loudly explode dealing 1d6 points of sonic damage to the creature in the square. Spreading a bag of pellets over a wider area or throwing the bag at a target has no substantial effect.

Gnomes use blasting pellets mainly as alarm systems, hiding the pellets under leaves or among other stones and gravel. Using the normal rules for creating alchemical items, a character with the Alchemy skill can make a bag of blasting pellets with a successful Alchemy skill check (DC 25).

**Cost:** 50 gp; **Weight:** 2 lb.

## DOPPELGANGER ARMOR

*Doppelganger armor* takes full advantage of the gnome love of trickery. A suit of +1 *glamered leather*, this armor allows the wearer to steal the images of others. When the wearer of the armor desires, she can touch another person and store that creature's physical image in the armor. There are no indications that the creature's image has been recorded, but should the creature not wish to be touched, the wearer must successfully make a touch attack to store the image.

*Doppelganger armor* relies on the *alter self* spell to provide the wearer's disguise, so it can only store the image of a creature that the *alter self* spell could mimic if the wearer were to cast the spell.

At any point after storing the image, by utterance of a command word, the wearer can alter her appearance to become an identical physical duplicate of that person. This transformation has the effects

of an *alter self* spell, except the image is so exact that the wearer gains a +20 bonus to the Disguise skill check. Due to the glamered special quality of the *doppelganger armor*, the wearer's armor

changes shape to appear as a normal set of clothing or armor as appropriate to the disguised form. Unlike a true doppelganger, however, the wearer does not gain access to the victim's thoughts, memories, or knowledge, so the disguise works best if the wearer doesn't have to interact with people who know the being whose image she's currently wearing.

*Doppelganger armor* only stores a single image at a time, so the act of storing a new image wipes out any previously stored image. The wearer can remain in her altered form indefinitely or revert to her own form at will as a standard action. Only a *true seeing* spell or similar magic reveals the true form of the armor and the wearer.

Gnomes use this armor to infiltrate areas they normally wouldn't have access to and to spy on their enemies. Gnome bodyguards might also disguise themselves as their employers to confuse would-be assassins.

**Caster Level:** 10th;  
**Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *alter self*;  
**Market Price:** 22,160 gp; **Cost to Create:** 11,080 gp + 886 XP.







## PORTABLE BREACH

The *portable breach* appears to be a large bolt of cloth about 5 feet in diameter. A *breach* is generally made from a light, high quality material such as silk, and is dark in color. When the *portable breach* is placed on a wooden, plaster, or stone wall, ceiling, or floor, it instantly creates a 5-foot diameter passage up to 10 feet long. If placed on a wall, ceiling, or floor more than 10 feet thick, the *portable breach* makes a niche or dead end passage 10 feet deep. This effect is similar to a *passwall* spell cast by a 10th-level sorcerer except that it has no duration; the passage vanishes when the *portable breach* is taken off the surface.

The entrance of a passage made by a *portable breach* has a fabric border that seems to join with the surface of the wall, ceiling, or floor. Simply tugging on this border removes the *breach* from the surface. If dispelled or if removed from a surface while creatures are in the passage, the creatures are harmlessly ejected out the nearest exit.

**Caster Level:** 10th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *passwall*; **Market Price:** 90,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 45,000 gp + 3,600 XP; **Weight:** —.

## BRACERS OF WANDS

Gnome arcane spellcasters typically rely on magic items like *bracers of armor* to increase their ability to resist attacks. The invention of the *bracer of wands* has changed that.

*Bracers of wands* are magic leather armbands that extend from wrist to elbow. On the undersides,

leather belts bind them onto the wearer's arm, while the back of each bracer holds three thin leather tubes, each just big enough to hold a standard magic wand.

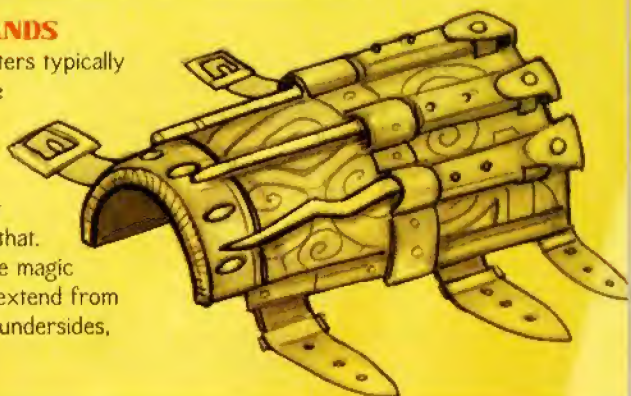
*Bracers of wands* can be "attuned" to different wands. Immediately after being placed in one of the slots of the bracers, a charge is harmlessly drained from the wand. The wand is then attuned to the slot and remains so until removed. Wands in a bracer slot can be used without the need to draw them and without the need to hold the wand in a hand.

Wands can be removed and replaced from their slots in *bracers of wands*, but each time a wand is attuned to a slot on a bracer, it loses another charge. Both bracers must be worn for the *bracers of wands* to function.

Wands in the *bracers of wands* can be attacked and broken, and characters using the bracers can be disarmed of wands. In such cases, treat the wands as though they were held by the wearer.

The *bracers of wands* do not grant a character the ability to use a wand if the character is not normally able to do so. Rogues attempting to use a wand in *bracers of wands* with their Use Magic Device skill must first make a skill check to use the bracers (DC 20) and then make a second check to use the wand.

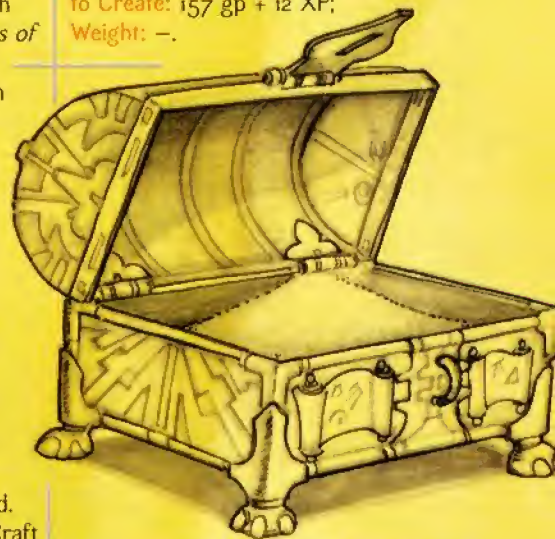
**Caster Level:** 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wand, Craft Wondrous Item; **Market Price:** 60,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 30,000 gp + 2,400 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.



## READING SNUFF

*Reading snuff* is a fine, brown powder typically found in a small container made of silver or gold. When it is sprinkled on any form of writing, the writing becomes intelligible to anyone capable of viewing the script. This has the effect of both *read magic* and *comprehend languages* as though cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer, but the script is readable by all creatures that can read any language and that view the writing while the application of *reading snuff* remains effective. An application of snuff renders writing readable for 30 minutes. Each handful of snuff is sufficient to cover about 10 square feet of a surface (both sides of 5 pages in a spellbook). If only part of a spell on a scroll or in a spellbook is rendered legible, readers can make a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + spell level) to determine the nature of the spell.

**Caster Level:** 3rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *comprehend languages*, *read magic*; **Market Price:** 315 gp; **Cost to Create:** 157 gp + 12 XP; **Weight:** —.



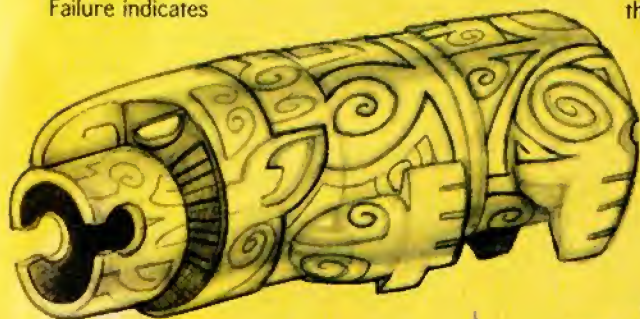
## ALAD'S FIRE EXTINGUISHER

The first fire extinguisher was created by the gnome sorcerer Alad. A friend of an unusually kind efreeti, Alad made many forays to the Elemental Plane of Fire. *Alad's fire extinguisher* made such forays easier in many respects.

*Alad's fire extinguisher* is a large metallic cylinder with an open end. Often made in the shape of a dragon, gnome, or other living creature, the fire extinguisher is a potent weapon against fire and creatures of the fire subtype. The extinguisher can be used as a standard action to emit a spray of thick, white foam in a 45-foot cone. This foam



instantly extinguishes normal fires in the cone's area. Magically created fires (such as a *wall of fire*) can be extinguished and dispelled with a successful dispel check as though made by a 9th-level sorcerer. Creatures of the fire subtype in the cone's area must make Reflex saving throws (DC 19). Success indicates that they take half of 9d6 points of cold damage. Failure indicates



they take 18d6 points of cold damage. Creatures in the area are also coated by the foam and subject to an *endure elements (fire)* spell. Scraping off the foam has no effect, and the foam dissipates naturally in 1d4 rounds (the *endure elements* effect remains for the full duration).

**Caster Level:** 9th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *cone of cold*, *endure elements*, *quench*; **Market Price:** 68,400 gp; **Cost to Create:** 34,200 gp + 2,736 XP; **Weight:** 6 lb.

## TRAPFINDER ARMOR

*Trapfinder armor* is a favorite among gnomes, especially when a trustworthy rogue isn't near by and there is a need to detect magic and mundane traps. *Trapfinder armor* is a suit of +2 leather with numerous flaps, loops, and pockets in which to store a set of masterwork thieves' tools, a climbers kit, and other tools useful to rogues. When the armor is found, it usually contains all the tools used by the former wearer.

The armor has several functions that aid in detecting traps. With the utterance of

a command word, the wearer can *detect snares and pits* as though cast by a 3rd-level druid and *find traps* as though cast by a 3rd-level cleric, three times a day each. In addition, *trapfinder armor* can also detect magic traps (electrified floors, flame jets, and so on) and spell traps (*explosive runes*, *fire trap*, *glyph of warding*, *greater glyph of warding*, *snare*, and so on)

three times a day upon command. This functions like a *detect magic* spell cast by a 3rd-level cleric, but it only detects the presence of magic traps and spells set as traps.

Surface gnomes commonly employ *trapfinder armor* to find mundane traps when infiltrating kobold warrens and giant lairs. Svirfneblin often use the armor when confronting drow and illithids, as their enemies love employing all manner of magic traps.

**Caster Level:** 6th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *detect magic*, *detect snares and pits*, *find traps*; **Market Price:** 12,960 gp; **Cost to Create:** 6,480 gp + 518 XP.



## SPELLFAST MEDALLIONS

*Spellfast medallions* are all similar in appearance, although there are many different kinds. They are 2-inch diameter medallions of brass or bronze, usually covered with runes of some sort. *Spellfast medallions* magically adhere to a given surface if the user makes a successful touch attack. If attached to a creature, it must make a Strength check (DC 20) to remove the medallion. Once removed, the medallion loses all its magical properties. Attached *spellfast medallions* immediately have a magic effect, usually a spell that affects the creature or object it is attached to. Once the magic has finished taking effect, the medallion loses magical properties and falls off whatever surface it was bonded to.

**HEAT METAL MEDALLION:** When attached to a creature or object, this medallion has the effect of a *heat metal* spell as though cast by a 3rd-level druid. A successful saving throw versus this effect negates it, but the medallion remains harmlessly attached for the duration of the spell. If attached to a creature or object without metal, the medallion itself heats up, and the spell takes effect as normal. If removed before the duration of the *heat metal* spell would end, the spell effect immediately ends.

**Caster Level:** 3rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *heat metal*; **Market Price:** 600 gp; **Cost to Create:** 300 gp + 24 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

**PAIN MEDALLION:** When attached to a creature, this medallion causes the creature to suffer wracking pains and agony. An affected creature suffers a -4 penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.

A successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) reduces this penalty to -2. Unless removed, the medallion continues to cause the creature pain for 3 rounds, after which the *pain medallion* falls to the ground.

**Caster Level:** 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *inflict critical wounds*; **Market Price:** 2,800 gp; **Cost to Create:** 1,400 gp + 112 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.





**Gravity Medallion:** When placed on a creature or unattended object, this medallion affects it as though a *reverse gravity* spell cast by a 13th-level sorcerer affected just the creature or object to which the medallion is attached. The creature or object immediately falls up for 60 feet. If there is something for the creature to hold onto, it can make a Reflex save (DC 20) to keep itself from falling up, but it hangs toward the sky.

If some solid object (such as a ceiling) is encountered in the creature's or object's upward fall, it strikes it in the same manner as a downward fall. It can then stand on the surface it struck, but if it moves more than 5 feet from the place where it landed, normal gravity takes over and it falls to the ground. It can remain in place or within 5 feet of the place where it struck for 13 rounds before the magic of the medallion ends and it falls back to the ground. If a creature or object reaches 60 feet without striking anything, it remains there, oscillating slightly, for 13 rounds. If a creature removes the medallion while the *reverse gravity* magic is in effect, normal gravity takes over and it falls.

Creatures that can levitate or fly are immune to the effects of a *gravity medallion*. The medallion remains harmlessly attached to such creatures until removed or 13 rounds elapse.

**Caster Level:** 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *reverse gravity*; **Market Price:** 9,100 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,550 gp + 364 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

**BOOM MEDALLION:** This deadly medallion is often surreptitiously attached to a creature or object to take advantage of the element of surprise. When attached, the medallion sits harmlessly on the creature or object for 5 rounds

and then explodes in a 20-foot burst of fire that causes 13d6 points of fire damage. A successful Reflex saving throw (DC 20) allows a creature to take half damage.

If removed before the 5 rounds are up, the act of removing it has a 25% chance of causing the medallion to activate early; otherwise, removing it harmlessly drains away the magic of the *boom medallion*.

**Caster Level:** 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *delayed blast fireball*; **Market Price:** 9,100 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,550 gp + 364 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

**SLOW MEDALLION:** When attached to a creature, this medallion has the effect of a *slow* spell as though cast by a 5th-level sorcerer. A successful saving throw against this effect negates it, but the medallion remains harmlessly attached for the duration of the spell. If removed before the duration of the *slow* spell would end, the spell effect immediately ends.

**Caster Level:** 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *slow*; **Market Price:** 1,500 gp; **Cost to Create:** 750 gp + 60 XP; **Weight:** 1 lb.

DMs and players can create *spellfast medallions* other than those listed here. To do so, review the Creating Magic Items section of Chapter 8: Magic Items in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* and use the pricing structure outlined below:

Market Price = spell level x caster level x 100 gp.

## FLASH-BANG

These alchemical devices were first created by gnome illusionists for use in adventuring but have spread throughout the world as a result of their utility. Each

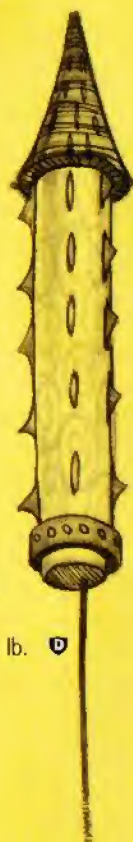
is a 1-inch-diameter cylinder of thin wood or tightly wrapped paper about 10 inches in length. At one end is a fuse that can be lit like a torch. Typically, a flash-bang is created with a fuse that burns down in 2 rounds, allowing someone to pull it out and light it one round (provided there is a nearby source of fire), then throw it on the next round so that it explodes on the round following that. When the fuse has finished burning, the flash-bang emits a loud thunderclap, a bright flash, and a series of smaller, multi-colored

flares. It continues to whine loudly and emit gouts of colored, sulfurous smoke for one full round after the initial thunderclap. The thick opaque smoke fills a 10-foot square and dissipates normally.

Flash-bangs are thrown as grenade-like weapons with a range increment of 10 feet. Creatures within 10 feet of the flash-bang when it emits its thunderous noise and bright flash must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) to avoid being dazed for 1 round and a Reflex save (DC 10) to avoid being dazzled for 1 minute. A dazed creature can take no actions, but defends itself normally. A dazzled creature suffers a -1 penalty to attacks. Deaf creatures are immune to the thunderous noise effect, while blind creatures are immune to the bright flash effect.

Using the normal rules for creating alchemical items, characters with the Alchemy skill can make a flash-bang with a successful Alchemy skill check (DC 25). Creating flash-bangs with longer fuses is possible. This does not appreciably change the cost unless the length of time reaches a minute; each minute of fuse length costs 1 gp.

**Cost:** 95 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb. 







*Sibling rivalry taken to a lethal conclusion. Family rivalries can be more volatile than your average adversarial relationship and offer lots of character-developing opportunities for players and DMs.*

# YOU CAN PICK YOUR FRIENDS

## FAMILY BACKGROUND FOR YOUR CHARACTER

by Rich Wulf • illustrated by Jeremy Jarvis

Maxen's hand flew to his belt, his fingers nervously scrabbling for the pouch of scrolls tied there. The wizard had been crouched in the shadows of the alley for hours, waiting for any sign that the shabby inn across the street was truly the headquarters of the Cult of Incubulos. He had just heard something moving behind him. If it really was the twisted cultists of the Plague Lord, he would have to act quickly. A scroll slipped from his shaking fingers.

Forget the scroll! He stood and held his staff forward defiantly, ready to face his doom with honor.

"Maxen?" called out a shrill voice. A plump, elderly woman waddled toward the young wizard, a long yellow scarf draped in her hands.

Maxen shook his head, unable to believe his eyes. "Mother?"

"You left home without your scarf," she said, smiling broadly and holding forth the gaudy scrap of cloth. Maxen's name was embroidered on it in a flowing green script.

"Mother!" Maxen whispered, glancing quickly over his shoulder. "Not now! I'm tracking the cult!"

"All the more reason to bundle up!" the old woman declared, shaking an admonishing finger at her son. "If you get sick fighting those cultists, I won't have it on my head!"

Maxen turned back toward the inn, hoping that nothing had happened while he was distracted. He saw three men in black glaring directly at him.

"Infidel!" one of them screamed, pointing at the mage. A dozen cultists burst from the inn, brandishing sickles and knives.

Not every D&D character is a tormented outcast, the last of his nation, or a lone wanderer far from home. The majority are simply ordinary people with extraordinary professions. Thus, it seems reasonable that most characters have a family, and that sooner or later, that family will have an effect on the character's life.

Family members shouldn't be faceless nobodies, potential henchmen, or a source of free food and shelter (even if the player treats his own family that way). They should be individuals with their own needs and desires. They might look upon their adventuring relative as a disappointment or worship him as an invincible hero. Then again, relatives might consider the character a faceless nobody, a potential henchman, or a source of free food and shelter.

Determining a character's family background isn't something that needs to be done all at once, but the basic elements can be established during character creation by the DM and the player together. You can invent the character's background yourself or use random tables for inspiration. You can also create a general idea of the character's family by answering a few basic questions:

- Is the character's family wealthy?
- Is it a large, extended family?
- Is the family respected or famous?
- Are any relatives also adventurers?

If so, do they practice the same profession as the character?

A wizard who hails from a family of wizards might have mighty allies to call upon in times of need, but she might also have to deal with the occasional cousin or aunt dropping by uninvited to borrow spell components and books.

During character creation, it might also be interesting to establish a few of the more important members of your character's family. Immediate family, siblings, parents, and others would fall into this category, as would the current leader of the family. Is the family led by an eccentric old matriarch who donates her fortune to the poor? Is the patriarch a miserly old lunatic who wears socks on his hands to save money on gloves? After the player determines the names and general attitudes of the NPCs she deems significant, the DM can flesh out the rest as it becomes important to the campaign. The *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* has a wealth of information for creating interesting NPCs.

Determining a character's family background not only helps you decide where a character has been and how she has been brought up, it also gives meaning and depth to the character's personality. Perhaps a tough, independent fighter was the youngest of a large family, often neglected by her parents and siblings and forced to fend for herself. Such details help the player explain why her character behaves the way she does.

Of course, not every adventure should revolve around relatives. Such



events should be rare or they lose their freshness and significance. The campaign might degenerate into a soap opera, and players whose characters do not have large and detailed families might feel left out. Still, having a relative rear up from time to time can add flavor to a gaming session, bringing a higher level of emotional involvement for everyone.

Family is nothing new to the world of fantasy. The idea of a long-lost twin, a cruel stepmother, or a wicked villain who turns out to be the hero's father have sprung up time and again in movies and fiction. However, a character's family can and should be more than a source of villainy or clichéd surprises. Here are several suggestions for entangling your characters with family ties.

### SISTERLY LOVE

The character has a sibling who is also an adventurer, but the siblings are hardly fond of one another. Perhaps the character's older sister has joined another group of adventurers that often work toward the same bounty or treasure as the PC's party—and her group doesn't wish to share. Although their encounters with the party are usually mere coincidence, the sibling mistakenly thinks that the character is trying to steal her thunder. The character is likely to arrive at the same conclusion. As another option, perhaps the character has a jealous younger brother who follows the party around looking to make a name for himself by stealing the PCs' glory.

In either of these cases, the rivalry should be strong enough that the siblings look upon the prospect of cooperation with extreme distaste, but it should not be strong enough for open combat. After all, they're still kin.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**HALF AND HALF** The party has uncovered half of a map leading to a great treasure or magic item necessary to the completion of an important quest. The other half has found its way into the hands of the PC's spiteful sibling. Only an alliance (or the theft of the sibling's map) allows either party to complete their goal.

**MISSING IN ACTION** The PC's sibling suddenly goes missing. Knowing of the long-time rivalry, the missing sibling's

party immediately blames the PC for her disappearance. If the PC wishes to clear his name instead of confronting his misguided rivals, he must save his hated sibling himself.

### MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The character bears a close resemblance to one of her relatives. The two aren't identical, but those not closely associated with the character often confuse the two. Things become even more confusing when the double gets herself into trouble and the character is blamed. Chaos ensues as the character struggles to prove her identity—and perhaps tries to clear her double's name as well.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**THE WRONG TARGET** The character's double has made powerful enemies who have decided to even the score by kidnapping the double and holding him for ransom. Mistaking the PC for his double, the kidnappers ambush him instead. If the kidnappers are successful, the double might not wish to pay the ransom, leaving the PC to find a way to escape on his own.

**GREEN-EYED MONSTER** The character's double has a jealous husband or lover. A chance meeting with the husband on the wrong side of town causes him to leap to conclusions. He decides that the PC must be his wife in disguise, and he erupts in a jealous rage. The character is left to try to find a way to extricate herself from the situation and perhaps help her double escape the dangerous relationship.

### BABYSITTING

This is a good idea for a character whose family lives far from the current campaign. One day the character's cousin shows up on the doorstep, travel-weary and penniless after her long journey. The cousin is the same class as the character but much less experienced. She has come a long way to study in her hero's footsteps and isn't about to be turned away.

Unfortunately, although she grasps the basic concepts of her trade, important details go by the wayside. Maybe a fighter forgets to don her armor properly, frequently becoming disabled in combat as her greaves fall around her ankles. If she is a priest, perhaps she has a tendency to mistake bottles of ordinary well water for holy water. If she is

## IMMEDIATE FAMILY

| 1d10 | Result  |
|------|---|
| 1    | Orphaned or otherwise separated from family at birth.   |
| 2-5  | Nuclear family (both parents still alive and together).   |
| 6-8  | Extended family (nuclear family, plus 2d6 cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and so on also living in the home). |
| 9-10 | Single-parent family (parents permanently separated or widowed; character raised by one parent).                    |

## NUMBER OF SIBLINGS

| 1d10 | Result |
|------|--------|
| 1-2  | 0      |
| 3-5  | 1      |
| 6-8  | 2      |
| 9    | 1d4+1  |
| 10   | 1d10+2 |

## AGE OF SIBLINGS

To discover the age of siblings, find out if the sibling is older or younger, then use the character's age as a base and add or subtract the modifier presented in the Racial Modifier chart below.

Dwarves, elves, gnomes, half-elves, and halflings are capable of producing children over a much longer period than humans and half-orcs. If you wish to represent this, use the multiplier provided in the parentheses.

| 1d6 | Result  |
|-----|---|
| 1-3 | Younger. Subtract the modifier from the PC's age to discover the sibling's age. |
| 4-6 | Older. Add the modifier to the PC's age to discover the sibling's age.          |

### Racial Modifier

|          |      |         |
|----------|------|---------|
| Human    | 1d8  | —       |
| Dwarf    | 2d10 | (x 1d4) |
| Elf      | 2d12 | (x 1d4) |
| Gnome    | 2d8  | (x 1d4) |
| Half-elf | 1d10 | (x 1d4) |
| Half-orc | 1d6  | —       |
| Halfling | 1d10 | (x 1d2) |



a wizard, she might frequently miscalculate the range of her spells, sometimes even hitting the wrong target. If she is a rogue, maybe she has the annoying habit of whistling loudly to herself while sneaking through open windows.

A responsible character will be quickly worn down by the burden of protecting this cousin. At the other end of the spectrum, a character who chooses to abandon or ignore the annoying relative could be blamed for her actions. An angry mob might show up demanding the character take responsibility. The city guard might drop by and politely ask the character to post bail. If the character doesn't want to anger his family, he eventually has to take the troublesome cousin under his wing and try to help.

#### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**YOUR BROTHER'S SHOES** The younger characters are left behind while the party goes on a dangerous expedition. After some time, no one hears from the adventurers. Assuming they fell to some mishap, it falls to the neophytes to follow along in an attempt to rescue the relative and friends. The players are then handed the character sheets of inexperienced cousins of one or more of the regular PCs to play out the adventure. The DM might award bonus experience for roleplaying the relatives' exuberant confidence and naivety.

**BUS FARE** This hook works best for parties that have little wealth. The inexperienced relative has traveled a long way at great expense without the knowledge of the family. The PC knows that his cousin's parents are powerful and protective, and they will be furious if she comes to harm. Unfortunately, the journey back home is expensive. The party must keep an eye on the neophyte until they've made enough cash to send her home—unless they want to abandon her and risk the family's vengeance. When the neophyte finally makes her trip, the party should tag along, just to make sure she arrives safely. If they don't, she jumps ship and shows up on their doorstep again the next morning.

#### ENGAGEMENT

In the fantasy medieval setting of most D&D campaigns, arranged marriages are common. If the character comes from a family seeking upward mobility,

he might wake up one morning to find himself with a fiancée. If the character views himself as a playboy or Casanova, this could be especially cruel, as he must decide whether his social ramblings are more important than his family's wishes. If the character already has a love interest, he might have a terrible time trying to follow his heart.

Another twist on this idea is that the character finds that his brother or sister is the target of an arranged marriage—and the intended bride or groom is a member of the character's adventuring party!

#### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**RUNAWAY BRIDE** The character's fiancée is upset about the marriage. The fiancée attempts to flee or is kidnapped by a jealous suitor. Of course, the character, hero that he is, is the natural choice to settle the matter and bring back his fiancée safe and sound. The question is, does he want to?

**LOVE AND MONEY** In arranged marriages, it was often customary for a woman's family to give the groom a dowry (although the DM could choose to have a male suitor do the same). The PC's sister is getting married, and the PC finds the responsibility for this gift dropped entirely in his lap. This should be a great amount of money or treasure beyond the character's means, determined without the character's knowledge or consent. The character's family will not or cannot pay the dowry. They have faith that the PC can find the funds. After all, adventurers stumble over treasure all the time, don't they?

#### BIG SHOES

This situation is a natural for characters from a long line of adventurers. The character's ancestor was a famous hero who accumulated a great deal of power and influence and went out in a blaze of glory. Now the character has taken up the sword (staff, dagger, chalice . . .) of her idol and started down the same path. Some of the family wish the character every blessing. Others feel that the character is a poor imitation. Perhaps some feel that the job is too dangerous or that the character will never be good enough. Even a successful adventurer can look forward to being compared to her illustrious ancestor for most or all of her career.

#### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**ETERNAL ENEMY** The character is the spitting image of her dead ancestor. Unknown to the character, a dragon or other extremely long-lived enemy of her ancestor still lives and mistakes the character for the ancestor. Perhaps the family sword and armor she carries were stolen from the beast's hoard, adding to the confusion and anger when the two meet. Even after the mistake becomes clear, the family might still feel that it is the character's duty to finish what her ancestor started and bring the beast to justice. The enemy might also be reluctant to cease its vendetta when it realizes its mistake; the death of its enemy's granddaughter can be just as satisfying.

**GRANDPA'S SHADOW** The character stumbles over evidence that her ancestor wasn't as heroic as the legends make him out to be. She learns that the ancestor was a despicable villain, manipulating the bards of the time to paint him as a hero. The character must decide whether she wishes to expose the information or try to prove that the evidence is fraudulent.

#### BLACK SHEEP

This option is perfect for characters who are the only adventurers in their family. Upon visiting home, the character discovers that none of the inns want to house the party, and all of the shops seem to be charging unfairly high rates. Only the character's own home remains open, and his family is adamant that his "new friends" are not welcome.

It soon becomes obvious that the entire town disapproves of the character's career. This can be a tricky situation. The character could attempt to prove himself in some way, perhaps by slaying a local monster or working a beneficial spell. Unfortunately, a display of raw power might only succeed in frightening the townsfolk further. In the end, it could be easier to just move on and hope the town comes to its senses.

#### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**RIVAL TURF** One of the party's old enemies has found a home in the village as its protector. Though the villain seems to have reformed, he has spoken out harshly against the character and his friends, and they are no longer welcome. The character must decide whether to trust his birthplace to the





*Family legacies can be great devices for introducing new skills or prestige classes to your campaign.*

protection of an enemy or try to expose the villain's true motives, potentially turning his own home into a battlefield.

**HELPING HAND** The character discovers that his family and old friends are being shunned in the village. Other villagers won't provide food, clothing, or supplies except at highly inflated prices. He has two choices: remain in the village to find out where this hatred comes from or leave his family and friends to fend for themselves.

### INHERITANCE!

A rich family member suddenly passes away and leaves the character the coveted family fortune. This could be a castle, a powerful magic item, cash, or all three. Sadly, the windfall soon turns out to be a mixed blessing, as greedy family members swarm like flies to honey, all trying to ingratiate themselves and charm, cajole, or swindle away the character's birthright. Simply stepping away from the inheritance is an option, but such callous treatment of the family name and fortune could result in anger or suspicion among the family. In the end, poverty might seem a blessing.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**CURSES!** The family inheritance isn't all it's cracked up to be. The money is minted of a coinage useless in the

character's homeland, and it curses all those who touch it. As soon as word gets out, the character's relatives suddenly lose interest. Now the PC must determine how to rid herself of the burden.

**GRANDMA'S GHOST** The family home is inhabited by the spirit of its previous owner, who appears only to the rightful owner of the estate. This is, of course, the PC. The ghost makes herself known only when the character is alone or dreaming, and it always demands that the character avenge her death. The character can try to solve the mystery, pass ownership of the house onto some unsuspecting patsy, or never sleep again.

### SECRET SIBLINGS

The character discovers that he was separated at birth: Somewhere out there, he has a twin brother or sister. The clues are sketchy, but if the character can piece them together, he might be able to reunite himself with this long-lost family member.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**ALL IN THE FAMILY** The character discovers that his missing relative is a member of his own party! This should create an opportunity for no end of chaos and genealogical bewilderment as the two siblings attempt to figure out

## RANDOM FAMILY BACKGROUND

| 1d10 | Result  |
|------|---|
| 1    | The character comes from a family of adventurers, of which the character is the latest generation. The family loves and supports the character's career choice. |
| 2    | The family has adventurers, but the family does not support the character's choice to become one.   |
| 3-6  | The character is the only adventurer in the family, but the family supports this choice.  |
| 7-8  | The character is the only adventurer in the family, and they are uncertain what to think of the character's choice.   |
| 9-10 | The character is the only adventurer in the family, and they don't support this choice.   |



# FAMILY ORGANIZATION

| id10 | Result  |
|------|---|
| 1-2  | <p><b>THE FAMILY IS VERY CLOSE.</b></p> <p>They are patriarchal, with a grandfather or another important male elder making most of the important family decisions. Family is likely to help the character so long as he is in the patriarch's good graces.</p>  |
| 3-4  | <p><b>SAME AS PREVIOUS RESULT, BUT THE FAMILY IS MATRIARCHAL.</b></p> <p>A grandmother or other important female elder makes family policy.</p>   |
| 5-6  | <p><b>THE FAMILY DOES NOT GET ALONG.</b></p> <p>They are divided into at least two distinct factions that constantly feud with one another. NPCs from the faction opposite the character are likely to be hostile. NPCs from the character's faction might be helpful, especially if she's working against their rivals. This result combines well with the Family Feud option.</p> |
| 7-8  | <p><b>THE FAMILY IS DISORGANIZED.</b></p> <p>Its members tend not to communicate with one another often, but they are not particularly hostile toward one another. Relatives outside the immediate family are likely to be indifferent to the character's existence.</p>  |
| 9-10 | <p><b>THE FAMILY IS EMOTIONALLY CLOSE BUT GEOGRAPHICALLY DISTANT.</b></p> <p>They attempt to keep in touch and will help the character if it's convenient.</p>  |

how much of their association was happenstance and how much was design.

**EVIL TWIN** The character's sibling is a powerful pawn or ally of an old enemy. The character must decide how to deal with the situation. Should he reveal his identity to his sibling or keep it a secret and continue fighting as usual.

## PESKY PARENTS

This option works well for characters who come from a long line of adventurers. Though the character is a full-grown adult with her own life and career, mom and dad still don't see it that way. The PC's parents tend to show up at the most inopportune times, trying to offer advice or just getting in the way. The character's parents are very likely far more experienced and powerful than the PC, causing the PC great humiliation when they show up and solve difficult problems for her without asking.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?** The character's parents know what's best for her, and that's certainly not life as a freelance adventurer. Mom and dad begin using their connections to ruin the character's name, spreading rumors of laziness, untrustworthiness, and general stupidity. Their intent isn't malicious; they have a genuine wish to have the PC return home, "where she belongs." The PC must decide whether to try to prove herself greater than her reputation or deal with her slandering parents directly.

**CHINA DOLL** The PC's parents accept her new life but fear for her safety. As a result, they have hired bodyguards to follow the character—very clumsy bodyguards. *Stupid* bodyguards. Big, dopey fellows who, while useful in a fight, have no sense of tact or stealth. They won't listen to the character when she tells them to stay behind (that's not their job) so she must decide whether to ditch them or make them a higher offer to leave her alone.

## FAMILY FEUD

This option also works best for characters who hail from adventuring families. At some point in the past, the family got on the wrong side of another adventuring family, causing a long-lasting feud between the two houses. The character might find himself getting

in trouble at unexpected times as he runs into rivals who hate him simply for his name. The character will accomplish little by attempting to distance himself from the feud; the enemy family will think it is a trick, and his own relatives will think he's being a coward.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**THICKER THAN WATER** A sudden war erupts between the families as many important members are mysteriously murdered on both sides. Though evidence suggests that the feud is responsible for the deaths, the PC finds a clue or two that suggests something else might have been responsible for the mysterious deaths. Both families conclude that this "clue" is nothing more than another trick, and the party is on its own to discover the true enemy before the families destroy each other.

**WHEREFORE ART THOU?** One of the character's closest relatives falls in love with a member of the other family. The character stumbles over the romance, and both parties beg him to keep it a secret. The relationship could lead to peace between the families or possibly an even more bitter period of fighting. The PC must make a hard decision about how to handle this touchy situation.

*Maxen didn't think there would be so many of them, and he hadn't expected them to be so well armed. Where had they found so many axes? He unrolled the scroll carefully and prepared to speak the ancient words of power . . .*

*"A dozen eggs, bucket of milk, loaf of bread, some powdered iron . . ."*

*The cultists screamed in triumph as they rushed forward. He wouldn't be able to prepare another spell in time.*

*Suddenly there was a deafening crack of thunder, and a brilliant plume of lightning plunged into the mob. Many were reduced to ash instantly. The rest screamed as they turned and fled, unwilling to face a mage of such power.*

*Maxen's brows furrowed. He didn't know any spells like that. Who could have cast something so powerful?*

*"Now, now, Maxen," his mother said, stepping out of the shadows at his side. "What did I tell you about hanging around with the wrong crowd?"*



# Water, Water Everywhere

## D&D Underwater Combat Rules

The phrase "underwater adventure" usually conjures up images of sunken ships and fearsome monsters of the sea. That need not be the case, however. There is water nearly everywhere, especially in deep caves and dungeons where so many daredevils venture in search of glory and treasure.

Water can be a potent dungeon feature, and a clever DM can use it to make traps more fearsome (the water-filled pit and the flooding room are old standbys), and also to conceal treasure or to make combat more demanding. This article considers the basics of underwater encounters no matter where they occur, from subterranean pools to the deep blue sea.

### Movement and Combat

Land-based creatures can have considerable difficulty when trying to fight in the water. Water affects a creature's attack rolls, damage, Armor Class, and movement. In some cases, a creature's opponents might get a bonus to attack the creature. The effects are summarized in the Combat Adjustments for Water sidebar.

### Other Water Effects

Water can affect everything from spells to vision, as noted below.

**Fire:** Non-magical fire (including

alchemist's fire) does not burn underwater.

**Magical Effects:** Most spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities work normally underwater. Water does not block line of effect, except where noted below.

Spells or spell-like effects with the fire descriptor are ineffective underwater unless the caster makes a successful Spellcraft check (DC 15 + spell level). If

successful, the spell creates a bubble of steam instead of its usual fiery effect. Supernatural fire effects are ineffective underwater unless their descriptions state otherwise.

The surface of a body of water blocks line of effect for any fire spell, regardless of where the spell originates. For example, a *fireball* cast underwater cannot be targeted at creatures above the surface, nor can an underwater

### Combat Adjustments For Water<sup>1</sup>

| CONDITION                         | SLASH OR<br>BLUDGEON<br>ATTK./DMG. | CLAW OR<br>TAIL<br>ATTK./DMG. | MOVE                         | OFF<br>BALANCE?  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Freedom of movement</i> effect | Normal                             | Normal                        | Normal                       | No               |
| Swim speed                        | -2/Half                            | Normal                        | Normal                       | No               |
| Successful Swim check             | -2/Half <sup>2</sup>               | -2/Half                       | Quarter or half <sup>2</sup> | No               |
| Firm Footing <sup>4</sup>         | -2/Half                            | -2/Half                       | Half                         | No               |
| None of the above                 | -2/Half                            | -2/Half                       | Quarter or half <sup>3</sup> | Yes <sup>5</sup> |

<sup>1</sup>Water modifiers apply when wading in water at least waist deep, swimming, or walking along the bottom of a body of water.

<sup>2</sup>The speeds listed are standard for the Swim skill. You can move one quarter your speed as a move action or one-half your speed as a full-round action. To avoid the off-balance penalty (see note 5), you must make a Swim check (DC 5 + the DC for the water). The effects of a successful check last until your next turn. Making the Swim check is a move-equivalent action.

<sup>3</sup>Creatures without *freedom of movement* effects or swim speeds make grapple checks underwater at a -2 penalty, but they inflict damage normally when grappling.

<sup>4</sup>Creatures have firm footing when walking along the bottom, braced against a wall, or the like. You can walk along the bottom only if you carry enough weight to weigh you down. The amount of weight required depends on your size, as follows: Fine 1 lb.; Diminutive 2 lb.; Tiny 4 lb.; Small 8 lb.; Medium-size 16 lb.; Large 32 lb.; Huge 64 lb.; Gargantuan 128 lb.; Colossal 256 lb. The items you carry to weigh yourself down must be non-bulky and non-buoyant.

<sup>5</sup>Off-balance creatures lose Dexterity bonuses to Armor Class, and opponents gain a +2 attack bonus against them.



fireball spread above the surface.

Invisible creatures displace water and leave a visible bubble, although the creature still has half concealment (20% miss chance).

**Ranged Attacks Underwater:** Thrown weapons are ineffective underwater, even when launched from land or the air. Other ranged weapons suffer a -2 attack penalty for each 5 feet of water they pass through in addition to the normal penalties for range. (See the equipment section for specific exceptions to these rules).

**Melee Attacks Underwater:** Melee attacks also suffer a -2 attack penalty for each 5 feet of water they pass through. Attackers using reach to make melee attacks ignore this penalty if they have *freedom of movement* effects. Creatures with swim speeds also ignore the penalty for melee attacks.

**Attacks from Land:** Attacks tend to be deflected when they pass through the water's surface. Characters swimming, floating, or treading water on the surface, or wading in water at least chest deep have one-quarter cover against melee or ranged attacks from landbound (or airborne) opponents. Landbound opponents who have *freedom of movement* effects ignore this cover when making melee attacks. A completely submerged creature (no part of its body sticking above the surface) has one-half cover against attacks from landbound opponents unless those opponents have *freedom of movement* effects. Magical effects are unaffected, except for fire effects, which follow the rules given above, and effects that require attack rolls, which are treated like any other ranged attack.

**Attacks from Underwater:** Ranged attacks from submerged creatures against opponents on land (or in the air) suffer the same penalties. That is, an opponent on land or in the air has one-half cover against attacks from submerged creatures, and such attacks suffer a -2 penalty for every 5 feet of water they pass through. Underwater creatures ignore this penalty when making melee attacks.

**Underwater Visibility:** Submerged or swimming creatures can also gain concealment from the water, depending on how clear it is.

Ocean water and water in glacial lakes and spring-fed pools is generally

free of heavy silt, algae, or other visual impediments and is fairly clear. Even perfectly clear water obscures vision, even darkvision, beyond 200 feet. Creatures have one-quarter concealment at 50 feet (10% miss chance), one-half concealment at 100 feet (20% miss chance), three-quarters concealment at 150 feet (30% miss chance), and nine-tenths concealment at 200 feet (40% miss chance). Beyond 200 feet, creatures have total concealment (50% miss chance and opponents cannot use sight to locate the creature).

Most freshwater lakes and rivers contain moderate amounts of silt, algae, swirling sands, seaweed, or other visual impediments. This turbid water allows less sighting distance, and creatures become completely concealed more quickly. The maximum sighting distance in turbid water is 100 feet or less (the more turbid the water, the less sighting distance). At one quarter the sighting distance, creatures have one-quarter concealment. At half the sighting distance, creatures have one-half concealment. At three-quarters of the sighting distance, creatures have three-quarters concealment. At the sighting distance, creatures have nine-tenths concealment. Beyond the sighting distance, creatures have total concealment. Water in swamps, lagoons, and stagnant ponds might contain excessive amounts of algae, seaweed, mud, or other visual impediments. Such water is so murky that it allows vision to 5 feet or 0 feet.

Aquatic creatures can see twice as far through the water as other creatures (but twice 0 feet is still 0 feet).

**Holding Your Breath:** As noted in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, any character can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to twice his Constitution score. After this period of time, the character must make a Constitution check (starting at DC 10) every round in order to continue holding his breath. Each round, the DC increases by +1. When the character finally fails his Constitution check, he begins to drown. In the first round, he falls unconscious (0 hp). In the following round, he drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, he drowns.

Vigorous activity, such as fighting, strains the character, reducing the

## Encounter Distance Underwater

To determine encounter distance underwater, use the steps outlined in Chapter 3 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, but use the following tables to determine the spotting distance.

### UNDERWATER SPOTTING DISTANCE

| Terrain        | Distance*              |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Dense weeds    | 1d4 x 5 ft. (25 ft.)   |
| Moderate weeds | 2d4 x 10 ft. (50 ft.)  |
| Light weeds    | 3d4 x 10 ft. (75 ft.)  |
| Open Water     | 5d4 x 10 ft. (125 ft.) |
| Murky Water    | Limit of sight**       |

\*Double the spotting distance for aquatic creatures.

\*\*Or the spotting distance allowed by the terrain, whichever is lower.

### UNDERWATER SPOTTING DISTANCE

| Circumstances          | DC                      |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Base                   | 20 <sup>1</sup>         |
| Size                   | +/-4                    |
| Contrast               | +/-5 or more            |
| Stillness (not moving) | +5 per size category    |
| 6 or more creatures    | -2                      |
| Moonlight <sup>2</sup> | +5                      |
| Starlight <sup>2</sup> | +10                     |
| Total darkness         | Impossible <sup>3</sup> |

### DEPTH MODIFIER<sup>4</sup>

|              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| Clear water  | +5 per 50 ft. |
| Turbid water | +5 per 35 ft. |
| Murky water  | +5 per 10 ft. |

<sup>1</sup>It should be 25 if one side is hiding, and ignore size modifiers (see page 60 in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*).

<sup>2</sup>Give a +5 bonus to Spot checks if the spotter has low-light vision or if she has darkvision that extends far enough.

<sup>3</sup>Unless the spotter has darkvision that extends far enough.

<sup>4</sup>No depth modifier applies at depths less than the listed number. For greater depths, apply the modifier for each additional unit of depth or fraction of a unit. Ignore the depth modifier if the spotter has darkvision that extends far enough. If the spotter has low-light vision, double the unit. For example, a creature with low-light vision operating in clear water at a depth of 95 feet has no depth modifier for spotting.



time a character can hold his breath to a number of rounds equal to his Constitution score.

## The Third Dimension

Because swimming creatures can move in all three dimensions, it's often necessary to measure distances between creatures at different depths, or to adjudicate movement upward or downward at an angle.

The Triangulated Distances table shows distances between points at different heights; the values have been rounded off to the nearest multiple of 5 for convenience in game play. To use the table, find the horizontal distances between the two points and then the vertical distance between them, the point where the column and the row cross is the actual distance. For example, if two creatures are 100 feet apart horizontally and 50 feet apart vertically, the actual distance between them is 110 feet. You also can use the table to determine how far a creature can swim in a turn if it also travels up or down. To do so, find the vertical distance the creature wishes to swim on the left side of the table, then move right until you find the first number that equals the creature's swimming speed.

## Equipment Underwater

There are a few sundry pieces of equipment that can assist characters in their underwater adventures.

**Crossbow:** Crossbow bolts tend to perform better underwater than other projectiles, and suffer only a -1 penalty to attack rolls for each 5 feet of water they pass through (instead of the usual -2 penalty for 5 feet of water).

Most crossbows, however, are fitted with winches or levers for cocking and loading, and these mechanisms can be difficult to use underwater. If the user does not have firm footing (see the combat section) the user must make a Swim check (DC 5 + the DC for the water) to successfully reload the crossbow. Hand crossbows and special underwater crossbows don't require a Swim check to reload.

**Goggles:** These crystal lenses set into a leather mask allow for clear vision underwater. They allow nonaquatic creatures to see one-and-half times as far as normal underwater (but one and half times 0 is still 0).

**Javelins and Similar Weapons:** Unlike most other thrown weapons, a javelin is effective when thrown at a submerged target from the land or air. The target of the javelin attack still gains cover from the water, and the attack also suffers the standard -2 penalty for each 5 feet of intervening water. Darts, spears, and tridents also share this characteristic.

**Short-Hafted Piercing Weapons:** Weapons such as the morningstar and the pick, while capable of inflicting piercing damage, impose a -2 attack

## Underwater Equipment

| Item                           | Cost  | Weight | Craft DC |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------|----------|
| Goggles                        | 25 gp | 1 lb.  | 15       |
| Underwater crossbow, light     | 55 gp | 6 lb.  | 15       |
| Underwater crossbow, heavy     | 75 gp | 9 lb.  | 15       |
| Underwater crossbow bolts (10) | 2 gp  | 5 lb.  | 12       |

penalty and inflict only half damage when employed underwater without a *freedom of movement* effect.

Normally, piercing melee weapons do not suffer this penalty.

**Underwater Crossbow:** Sometimes called a sahuagin crossbow, this martial weapon has an ingenious system of levers and stirrups that make it easy to reload underwater (you can reload it without a Swim check).

The sahuagin are infamous for their ability with these weapons, and a sahuagin that makes a successful Swim check (DC 5 + the DC for the water) can reload a heavy underwater crossbow as a move equivalent action; this maneuver is only effective in water at least 3 feet deep.

**Underwater Crossbow Bolts:** These bolts are specially shaped for underwater use. When fired underwater, these bolts suffer no penalties for the intervening water. The underwater bolts are of limited use above water: The crossbow's range increment is reduced by half, and the bolt can be fired a maximum of 5 range increments.

## Triangulated Distances

(All distances are expressed in feet.)

|     | 5   | 10  | 15  | 20  | 25  | 30  | 35  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 5   | 5   | 10  | 15  | 20  | 25  | 30  | 35  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 |
| 10  | 10  | 15  | 20  | 25  | 30  | 35  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 |     |
| 15  | 15  | 20  | 25  | 30  | 35  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 |     |     |
| 20  | 20  | 25  | 30  | 35  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 |     |     |     |
| 25  | 25  | 30  | 35  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 |     |     |     |     |
| 30  | 30  | 35  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 |     |     |     |     |
| 35  | 35  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 |     |     |     |     |     |
| 40  | 40  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 45  | 45  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 50  | 50  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 55  | 55  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 60  | 60  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 65  | 65  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 70  | 70  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 75  | 75  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 80  | 80  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 85  | 85  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 90  | 90  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 | 170 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 95  | 95  | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 | 170 | 175 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 100 | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 | 170 | 175 | 180 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 105 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 | 170 | 175 | 180 | 185 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 110 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 | 170 | 175 | 180 | 185 | 190 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 115 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 | 170 | 175 | 180 | 185 | 190 | 195 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 120 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 | 170 | 175 | 180 | 185 | 190 | 195 | 200 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |





# Troupers

The wispy folk  
bring the nightmares.

by Neal Barrett, Jr. • Illustrated by Jeff Laubenstein





Tomm had never seen such an awesome, wondrous sight. As the trim vessel swept through the narrows, the evening seemed to pause, caught in a single moment, snared, seized, suspended in a magical instant that owed no allegiance to time.

"If there's a more splendid place upon the earth," he said aloud, "I've surely yet to see it, and doubt I ever will. . . ."

This pleasant thought was shattered by an unearthly chorus of shrieks and strident wails from the tangled shrouds above. Tomm scowled at the louts as they deftly swung from one line to the next. He had no quarrel with Newlies. He felt they were no worse or better than humankind. Still, the Yowlies as a whole were a vile, unfriendly lot. With their flat pink noses and pumpkin-seed eyes, they seemed to be closer to their animal heritage than Mycers, Bowsers, or other Newlie folk.

Still, they were prized for their agile nature, and you couldn't board a ship without a horde of the fellows leaping about.

"Gives me the shudders, they do," Tomm said. "Ought to be a rule of some sort. Keep 'em from pestering passengers at sea. . . ."

"Oh, dear, you know what they say about people who talk to themselves, Master Tomm."

"I can't say I do," Tomm said, turning again, this time with a heady tingle of delight. "Tell me, Mistress Arrita, for I seldom listen to what I have to say."

Arrita laughed, as lovely a sound as Tomm had ever heard, a laugh, a trill, a resonance so pure it was nearly a song itself.

In truth, there was nothing about Arrita D'Ameville that Tomm could fault in any way.

"I suppose I was jabbering on," Tomm said. "I hope you don't think I'm feeble in the head."

"I'm—pleased you *did* speak, sir. We've said hello at table, but I thought to never catch you alone."

"Well, I—did not wish to presume. . . ."

Tomm prayed the onset of evening masked the rush of heat that surely pinked his face.

"You are stopping at Grunddak then," she asked, "or going on to Elimann?"

"Stopping, really. Doing business there."

"Oh, then you'll get to see the Grizz. I have heard they're such magnificent creatures. One can scarcely imagine a being of such enormous size!"

"So I've heard, yes. I—"

"Does a herring have a tail?"

Does a pie taste good?

Does a hammer have a nail?

Does a Grizz sit in the woods?"

Arrita laughed, as the cheery rhyme left her lips.

"I fear I have a weakness for poesy," she said. "Sometimes a bit of verse simply comes unbidden to my mind."



"I'd say you have a gift, Mistress, one that should never be confined."

"You may call me Arrita, if I may simply say Tomm?"

"I would like that very much."

"Oh, as would I," she said, and Tomm felt a shiver of sheer electric joy.

"You are in the—magic profession, are you not? I'm sure I heard you speak to Master Bursoni and others at supper time."

Tomm didn't fail to miss the touch of hesitation in her voice, as her eyes took in the wooden case at his feet. Everyone was fascinated by magic, awed by the powers it attracted and repelled.

And, indeed, he had opened his big mouth at table. Not to impress the others, but to turn *her* attention from the sly, crafty Bursoni, who clearly had his eye on such a beauty traveling alone.

"Uh, not magic to any great degree," he told her, fully aware the subject wouldn't go away. "Amulets, talismans, rings. Minor whammies, household spells."

"No darker arts and such, I hope?" Arrita said, hiding her smile with a great exaggeration of alarm.

"Oh, my no. Let me put you at ease in that."

"Would you—show me, then? Let me peek at your charms?"

*Of all the things I do not wish to do...*

"You—couldn't see too well. There's not much light."

"Oh, I have very good eyes."

*Yes, yes, you truly do...*

Tomm set the case on a handy rail, snapped the latch, and lifted the lid.

"Oh *dear*," Arrita seemed entranced by the strange and marvelous wares. There were more things to see than the eye could comprehend. Charms of silver, charms of gold. Talismans of amber, talismans of stone, talismans of pitted yellow bone. Tiny paper packets, little leather sacs. Vials full of gnat's eyes, dead flies, hearts of black ants.

And oh, the rings! Rings of dark lead and coppery hue. Gems that pulsed with cold, witchery greens and blues.

And, to add to the wonder of this display, each charm, each ring, had its own snug niche, pressed into velvet so one seemed to complement the other in a neat and orderly array.

"How very—charming," Arrita said. "The items, the—magical things, as it were. Half, I note, are placed on lavender velvet, the others on red. Why might that be?"

"That's, uh—just what we do, you know?" Tomm said, for he'd scarcely noted this himself. "You learn that, you see."

"And where would that be? Would I be impertinent to ask?"

"No, not at all." Tomm turned away to clear his throat, for something enormous had lodged itself there.

"Master Fruckit—Frackit's Charm School. In—Olster West. I doubt you've heard of it before."

"Truly, I have never known anyone of the magical persuasion. Not before you."

And, all the while, her dark eyes flickered over the glittering treasures in the open case below.

"May I—just touch one or two? If that would break your secret rules—"

"Why yes, of course, by all means, do!"

"Let me see," she said, her fingers buzzing about like little bees. "Finally, she plucked a single ring and held it to the sun, a ring with a dazzling, daisy-yellow stone."

"Why, it's lovely, the loveliest ring I've ever seen!"

And, as Arrita began to place the ring back, Tomm, with no thought for the boldness of his act, reached out and took her hand in his.

"Please. I would—like you to keep it. I mean, if you could see your way."

Arrita looked startled, an expression that quickly eased into a smile.

"If you want me to, I shall most happily wear it, then. And every time I do, I shall think of you."

She looked away, then, her lashes shy veils that covered the secrets of her eyes. "Would you place it on my finger? As—a friend, of course. Nothing more."

Tomm took a deep breath. "Arrita, there is something I must confess, though I am sure it will change your feelings for me forever..."

"No, please." She touched one finger to his lips, dropped the ring in his palm, and held out her hand.

Tomm's hand trembled, and he nearly dropped the ring on the deck. As he reached for her finger, the yellow stone caught the sun and thrust a spear of light through his eyes, a light so hot, so burning citron bright, it ripped through his skull and pierced his very soul, seared him, scorched him with its fierce illumination, charred him with such a cruel incineration he was sure he'd been swallowed by a star.

"Tomm..."

tomm...

tomm!...

A voice, a very lovely voice, a voice that might have been a song, but oh, so distant, so impossibly far, and Tomm was adrift, caught between nowhere and no place at all, caught in the swift, relentless tide of that harsh and terrible light...

## Two

He knew he was down, and not standing up, the way one ought to be. Daring to open his eyes, he saw ragged pinnacles of stone, rising above a murky sea. It looked as if some giant had perished in the deep, and thrust his blotched and mottled hand above a watery grave.

"I suppose I'm dead," he said, "for if I were alive, this is not the sort of place where I would be..."

Tomm sat up, so quickly his head began to spin. He took a deep breath, and brought himself shakily to his feet. Demon's breath, what incredible force had flung him to this place! Lightning, a quake? Some disaster born of the sea?

And, if that were so, where was everyone else? The ship, the passengers and crew? And what had happened to Arrita D'Ameville? Had she perished too!

He knew it scarcely mattered what had brought him here. The important thing was keeping his wits about him, thinking on what to do next.

There was the sea. And, under his feet was solid, rocky ground. Two very good signs, as far as he could see.

Something, a feeling, the kind that says turn and look about, just such a feeling struck him, and turn is what he did.

There, coming toward him, was something entirely different, something he'd never seen before. It lumbered toward him in a slow, rolling gait, more like a rocking, a sway, than any sort of walk at all. It was tall, enormous, eight feet or more, a creature with a broad, shaggy head, tiny opal eyes, a prominent nose and massive jaws.

He knew, then, whatever power had jerked him from the vessel, tossed him through a star, had not tossed him far. He was somewhere near his destination, somewhere in Grunddak Land. For the being coming toward him could be nothing but a Grizz, one of the Newlie folk, one of the Chosen Nine.

Three centuries past, two crazed seers had picked nine creatures from the animal world and given them human



form—or nearly human, indeed, for, like the Grizz, all of the Newlies retained parts of what they'd been before.

Even before the Grizz reached him, an odorous wave nearly knocked Tomm off his feet.

*What could these fellows consume, Tomm wondered, to produce a smell so offensive as that?*

The Grizz came to a stop, looming over Tomm like a tree, dressed in drab overalls, and wearing a brightly-feathered hat.

"I would say you're going to Grunddak," the Grizz said, in a voice deep as a storm. "I would say that, for there's nowhere else to go."

"You would be correct," Tomm said. "And I would be pleased if you'd point me there."

"No need for that, as I am going there myself. I would be Gordak. Who would you be?"

"Tomm," Tomm said, "and I am pleased to meet you, sir."

"Why? I don't know you, you don't know me."

"Just a pleasantry is all. Nothing more than that."

"Yes, a *human* thing, indeed. We don't do that. Doesn't make sense, you see."

"Well, different customs wherever you go."

"We don't do that, either."

"Do what?"

"Go anywhere. What's the sense in that?"

The Grizz nodded at the case at Tomm's feet. "Those are very fine notions. If you wish to trade them, I would give you something worthwhile."

For a moment, Tomm was startled. What with his violent expulsion from the ship, and the appearance of the Grizz, he hadn't noticed the case at all. There it was, just as the fellow said—open, just as it had been when he'd placed the yellow ring on Arrita's finger—open, and apparently intact.

"Ah, they're nothing, really," Tomm said. "A little of this, a little of that." He quickly closed the case and held it snugly beneath his arm.

Gordak frowned. Clearly, the gleaming pretties had been too swiftly snatched away. "All them dohicks and brighties, what kind of stuff they be?"

"Magic, trickery, simple charms and spells."

The Grizz shook his broad head.

"Magic doesn't make a lick of sense. We don't do that here."

"Well, whatever works, friend."

"Shiny they be, though. Real shiny and bright. . . ."

The gray and restless bay narrowed to a peaceful, lazy river. A thick forest of mammoth evergreens replaced the ugly fingers of stone.

Tomm saw a number of homes made of rough-hewn timber, each nearly lost in the shadows of the trees. A thin veil of smoke rose from stone chimneys, bringing the smell of cookfires, vile and loathsome odors that nearly made him retch.

Gordak, who had little practice in reading human features, licked his chops and grinned.

"I'm starving too, friend. There's a real fine inn, right off the square. Ol' Lefdar, he'll fill us up good."

"I can scarcely wait," Tomm said.

The square was teeming with shops, booths, counters and carts. Crammed, jammed with untidy stalls piled with goods of every sort. There were very few humans about. A pair of slim Foxers, half a dozen Bowsers, floppy-eared fellows in those ridiculous bow ties they all seemed determined to wear.

Looming over them all were the Grizz, the lumbering natives of this land. Male and female alike dressed the same—baggy overalls and hats.

The most popular items in the market were hats. Hats of every shape, every color, every size. No one bought the hats except the Grizz. It seemed a strange habit for such huge and ponderous beings—much like placing a gnat atop a stump.

"I don't get to town often," Gordak said, shoving a handful of dark and bitter berries in his mouth. "Like I said, I'm a coner by trade, so I stay most times in the woods. Bring in a load now and then."

Tomm didn't dare ask why. Walking from the inn, it was all he could do just to keep his supper down. Now, he knew the source of the horrid smells in this land. The Grizz ate roots, shoots, onions, and leeks. Rancid berries, rotten bits of fish.

And, worse still, they ate bugs. Hard bugs, squishy bugs, bugs with hairy legs. Mixed the raw fish and the bugs all together in a thick and gummy stew, in a nasty, awful mess.

The one thing Tomm liked was honey. Though the bees were still in it, he ate a lot of that.

Tomm felt it was scarcely past noon. Still, a somber darkness had crept among the trees. He remembered, then, days in the Northlands were short, that they grew shorter still as the seasons wore on. There was a definite chill in the air, and Tomm wished he had a wrap.

The streets, the busy square, were nearly bare. Maybe everything closed when the cold began to whip through the trees.

At that very moment, Gordak stretched his arms, and yawned—a yawn that was a deep and lazy sound like a boulder rolling down a hill.

"Well," Tomm said, standing well back with some alarm. "You must have had a long night, friend."

"I surely did not," Gordak said. "We don't do that here."

"Yes. I see."

"I'm pleased you're beginning to understand our ways, Tomm. Here, let's stop. This will do us just fine."

"What will do fine? I don't under—"

Tomm stared after the Grizz, who had just disappeared through the entry of a large log house. Tomm peered inside. It was dark, and reeked with the sour smell of Grizz.

"I can't see a thing. Where are you, and what are you doing in here?"

"Don't shout," the Grizz said. "Have respect for others, Tomm. Over here, to your right."

"Others? What others is that? I don't—"

Tomm stopped in his tracks. He could see much better now, better than he really wanted to, for it was clear the room was full of Grizz—Grizz packed, Grizz stacked, piled in great ungainly heaps, piled a dozen deep, from one dark corner to the next.

And from this odorous mound rose a thunder, a thrum, a nearly visible sound, a chorus of snores that shook the very rafters and rumbled through the floor.

"What—what sort of place is this," Tomm asked, "what's—everybody doing in here?"

"Why, sleeping. Tomm. What'd you think they was doing? It's a *Shoffgadder*. That's what it's for."

"A—what?"

"*Shoffgadder*. Nappy room, I 'spect you human folk would call it."



"Ah, if you don't mind, I'll wait outside. I'll see you whenever you come out of the—whatever you said."

"Suit yourself, friend." Gordak turned over to show his massive backside to Tomm.

Tomm made his way carefully to the door, stepping over one bulky form then the next. *Nappy room, indeed. And scarcely after noon. The very idea of such a thing...*

Tomm poked his head outside, and quickly stepped back in again. It was fair horrid out there, cold enough to freeze a man's bones! The wind moaned like a horde of banshees screaming down from the north.

Tomm retreated quickly back into the smelly, crowded room. He knew he couldn't sleep, but to go out in that icy world... Better to suffer the stench than face that glacial horror again.

Besides, one could get used to anything, even a roomful of Grizz. It was warm, and asphyxiation was very much like a nap, wasn't it? One had to say that...

Tomm dreamed of Arrita, dreamed of slender limbs, dreamed of things he knew he shouldn't dream about at all. Held her close, looked into her eyes, saw his face reflected there, saw himself explode in a fierce and burning light, saw the great star as he fell into its cauldron, shouted, cried out, knew no one could hear...

Knew, that whatever burning horror had found him before, surely had him in its grasp again...

### Three

When he woke, the searing pain nearly thrust him down again. Demons danced inside his head, tumbled, stumbled, threw the furniture about. His vision whirled with stars, dizzy constellations ablaze with ghostly light.

*Damn it, I will not put up with this again!*

His head ceased to throb, and his eyes began to clear. He struggled to his knees and risked a look around. The first thing he saw was nothing at all. Not a pebble, not a rock. Not a hill, not a tree. Even the ground, when he touched it with his hand, was not truly ground, it was simply something *there*. A blank horizon met a colorless sky. No sun, no clouds, nothing but a vague, translucent light.

A deep, familiar groan brought him about, and he turned to see Gordak, squatting on his haunches, holding his great enormous head in his hands.

"Where am I, human person Tomm? What have you done with me?"

"I don't know where you are, and I haven't done a thing. Be still, and let me think."

"I don't like it here. It makes no sense to me."

"For once, I have to agree. This is a most peculiar place. I am not even certain we—"

Tomm stopped. He had been so lost in thought, he had failed to notice a sight that was right before his eyes. When he did, it was all he could do to contain his anger, his trepidation and alarm. For there, nearly lost behind Gordak's broad unseemly rear, was Tomm's magic case, open, unlatched, which it surely had not been before.

"What have you done, Gordak? What, may I ask, did you *do*?"

Tomm knew the answer at once, for guilt—or the regret at getting caught—was writ clear on Gordak's broad features.

"I was looking at the pretties, is all. You was sleepin' good, I didn't wish to wake you up and ask. I didn't do no harm—"

"No *harm*?" Tomm stared at the talismans and charms, fey objects shining bright. "The harm you did was to open the cursed thing. At least last time it tossed me about I landed on solid ground. I'm damned if I can guess where I am now!"

Peering at the open case, he felt something there was clearly amiss, something didn't seem right.

It came to him, then, came in a rush of understanding that raised the hackles on his neck. Arrita had noticed one side of the case was lined in lavender velvet, the other side in red. Now, those colors were reversed—red on the left, lavender on the right. And, more than that, each charm, each packet of spells, had flipped, twisted, warped the other way around.

Tomm looked at his hands. As a child, he had cut himself on a stone. The scar was still there. But now it was on the left hand, not on the right.

*Whatever the powers of the thing, it has tossed us through a mirror, turned us all about. I suppose we're lucky it didn't turn us inside out...*

Tomm felt his heart beat rapidly against his chest—more to the right, however, than the left.

"I hope you're thinkin' some way to get me back home," complained the Grizz. "I don't like it here at all. Least I got my hat."

Tomm felt it was not the time to tell Gordak the feather on the front of his hat was now on the back.

"There has to be an answer to this. Anything that goes *in* somewhere, must also come out."

"No offense, friend, but if I did stuff of the magic persuasion, I doubt I'd get myself in a mess like this."

Tomm peered at the colorless horizon, which was much like peering at nothing at all.

"If you must know, Gordak, this calamity of ours is not entirely your fault. Though, if you'd left that vile case alone..."

"I feel I must confess I am not acquainted with magic at all. I have no trade, for I've yet to imagine what I wish to be. I was offered very cheap passage on a vessel, an offer I accepted at once. An old man had died in his cabin, and remained there some time. No one wished to take his place, and thus, it came available to me."

"I found this case beneath his bunk. I opened it a hair, saw what it was, and shut it at once. My childhood was plagued by magic. I was forced to work in the bone mines by an evil seer, and my father was turned to stone for some time."

"But that is a story in itself, and I do not intend to tell it now. Needless to say, I wanted nothing to do with that foul profession. I intended to sell the case in Grundakk to give me fare for another port."

"Once on board, I sought to impress a comely lady by passing myself off as a great magician. I see now there is some foul divination attached to this thing. It clearly doesn't wish to be disturbed, and that is why it tossed me on your shore, and then brought the pair of us here."

"Tomm," Gordak said, "your story puzzles me greatly, for I understand little that humans or other folk do. Our way of life is based on reason and solid good sense..."

Tomm, though, scarcely heard his words at all. For out of the great emptiness where nothing ever appeared, something most extraordinary did...



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## Four

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Coming toward him across the colorless plain was a swarm, a swell, a veritable throng—more than a rabble, closer to a horde. This host, this dark and restless mass, stretched from one end of the dreary horizon to the next.

As it approached, it seemed to diverge into clusters, packs, small aggregations apart from the whole. And, when these bands grew closer still, he began to distinguish one from the rest. And *that* presented a sight even stranger than before.

Each, Tomm saw, was a sort of caravan, a train, a column of wagons, barrows and carts, each piled high with bundles, boxes, and crates of every sort.

A most ungainly lot, but Tomm scarcely gave these conveyances a glance, for it was the *creatures* in this ragged parade that sent glacial chills up his spine.

*They are beings, truly, he thought, but beings unfinished, beings incomplete . . .*

Creatures that were sheer, nearly transparent, thin as spider webs. Folk who lacked proper dimension, as if they were cut out of paper somehow. They flickered and they fluttered, stretched out of sorts.

"Great Goblin's teeth," Tomm said aloud, the image coming clearly to mind, "that's it, for sure!" For he'd seen the like when he was just fourteen—mirrors, brought by a trickster to the Baillo County Fair . . . mirrors that warped, wrenched, twisted a person out of shape, turned them into dizzy distortions of themselves.

His magic case, the scar on his hand, these quivery, shivery folk themselves—everything was a false reflection here, and nothing was real at all!

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## Five

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Clearly, there was no place to run, no place to go. In every direction, the wispy folk of the caravans darted about in a state of dizzy oscillation, unloading their carts, setting up their tents, driving poles at odd, impossible angles in the ground.

Often, one of these filmy beings would barge into another, and the two would explode in a shower of light. Then, they would pass on through each other as if nothing had happened at all.

For a long while, none of the travelers seemed to notice Tomm and Gordak were there. Then, one of the wispy fellows who was tossing bundles off a wagon happened to glance their way. He stopped what he was doing and flickered over in a shimmer, in a blink.

"Move along now," he said, in a hum, in a whistle, in a squeak, in a voice like winter against a window pane. "You can't stop here, get back where you belong."

Like the others of his kind, he seemed to waver up and down, this way and that. As he spoke, his features flowed in disturbing disarray.

"Sir, we would happily get where we belong. The plain fact is, we don't know where we are."

"Why, you're *here*," the creature said. "Where else would you be?" His shimmery eyes fell on Gordak. "You're a different sort. I don't think I've seen your kind before."

"We share that feeling, I believe," said the Grizz.

"At any rate, get where you belong and don't come back. Ossidio! Set that over here, not *there*. What's the matter with you?"

"You two. Are you still here? Go away. Go away now!"

"They're new, Abbidius. Can't you see that? They can't help but be confused."

"That's not my fault, is it? I can't stop and gab with their kind. Some of us have *work* to do."

With that, the creature called Abbidius stalked off in peculiar agitation.

"I'm sorry," said the newcomer, "Abbidius can be rather rude. But he's right, you know. You shouldn't be here, you must get where you belong."

"Are we back to that again? That's where we started, I believe."

In spite of the fact that the creature was a blur, a veil, fireflies awhirl in mad disarray, it was clear to Tomm this being was a she, and not a he. A flutter, a dizzy dilation, but a rather attractive dilation for all of that.

"I'm Tomm, and this is Gordak. You're right, we're new here, wherever that is. We are also hungry and thirsty, and tired. If you'll point us in the direction of a proper inn, we'll be out of your way."

"I'm Nadalia, Tomm and Gordak. How do you do? And I'm sorry you have a hungry and a thirsty and a tired. We don't *do* that here."

Tomm looked puzzled. "You don't do—what?"

"What you said, Tomm. Those are things we don't do."

Tomm stared at the Grizz. "I don't suppose you two are related by any chance?"

"Of course not," Gordak said. "That doesn't make a bit of sense."

"At least," Tomm said, "you can tell us where we are. It's clear we're where we shouldn't be."

"You're here, Tomm. Can't you see that?"

"Here."

"Why yes."

"And if you were me—us, you'd go where?"

"There." Nadalia pointed, in a shivery sort of way. "You'll find others of your kind."

"Well. That's a start, anyway." Tomm was relieved to learn there were others around besides the filmy folk, who were clearly no help at all.

"That—object you're carrying, Tomm. May I ask you what it's for?"

"What, this?" Tomm had nearly forgotten he still had his case of talismans and charms. "I am currently unemployed. For a short time, however, I was in the magic trade."

"Oh, yes." Nadalia appeared to shake her head, or something to that effect. "We don't do that, either. Be careful now. And do watch out for Grinders. They're all about, you know. . . ."

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## Six

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For some time, Gordak said nothing at all. Then, when they were quite a distance away, he stopped and looked back, shaking his broad and shaggy head.

"Grinders . . . Now what would that be, friend Tomm?"

"I have no idea. But it doesn't sound pleasant to me."

"How are we supposed to look for 'em, if we don't know what they are?"

"And that thing about *hungry*. I hope she didn't mean that. You know what else? We've been here some time, and it isn't getting dark, and it isn't getting light. It isn't getting anything at all."

"I've noticed that as well."

"Are you watching out for Grinders?"

"How would I do that, when I don't know what they are?"



"Just asking, Tomm. I think that Nadalia person was real sincere about that. . . ."

Tomm was certain the site where they'd met Nadalia was far behind. Still, it was difficult to tell, as there were countless such encampments as far as one could see. In each, the vague, ill-defined creatures scurried about, tending to their ragged, patchy tents and knobby poles that tilted this way, that way, any way but right.

Tomm couldn't guess what these beings were up to, and wasn't sure he wanted to know. What they were was an even more baffling matter—were they, as he'd first imagined, pale reflections of the world he'd left behind? What kind of vague and disembodied life would such a creature lead? What would it *do*?

"Uh-oh. Hold on, friend—" The Grizz stopped Tomm with a formidable grip. "Over there, have a look. I'm guessing those are human folk. They sure don't look like me."

Tomm felt a vague sense of relief. He had nearly forgotten Nadalia's promise that he would meet his own kind.

Yet, there they were. Four real people, squatting in a circle on the ground. Not a very promising lot, Tomm decided, as he came closer still. Four somber, sour-faced men who looked so much alike they might have been brothers—ugly brothers at that. Each was gaunt as a stick, each one bald as an egg. Worse still, each was naked as the day he was born.

The grim crew rose as Tomm and the Grizz approached. Tomm noted, with some despair, that each bore patches that were somewhat ill-defined. A foggy foot here, a wispy belly there. And, most unappetizing of all, an ugly with an insubstantial head.

One of the miserable creatures wobbled toward Tomm and the Grizz. Tomm did his best to hold his gaze on the fellow's upper parts.

"Good day," Tomm said, though it clearly wasn't at all. "We're new here, I wonder if you could help?"

"Help what?" The man glanced at Gordak, then turned his sullen gaze on Tomm. "You be movin' along. Be gettin' out of heres, an' don't come back."

"I'll excuse your behavior," Tomm said. "I expect you have good reason for your hostile attitude, if you've been

here any time at all. And, I'd be curious to know just how long that might be."

"Isn't no *long*, isn't no short. Isn't nothin's what it is. You hearin' me? Get outs an' don't be coming back."

"We certainly will not," said the Grizz. "We aren't looking for companions with crabby attitudes."

"Four . . ."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Four. Me and them three. Two makes six. Four's what we doin' we don't do two, we don't do six."

"I see," Tomm said, which he didn't, and neither did the Grizz. "Well, a pleasant day to you and—uh, the rest of the four."

"Don't do *days*. Didn't them demons tell you that?"

The man showed Tomm a horrid, spiteful grin. "Isn't nothing, you. All there is is bein' *here*. . . ."

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### Seven

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"I don't like it here, Tomm. Everything they don't got is the things I like best."

"I expect we'd better find our way out of this mess. I don't intend to end up like those poor creatures back there."

Tomm hesitated. "Did you—notice you could sort of see through the fellows? Not *all* the way through, like you can the filmy folk, but every now and then?"

"I was hoping it was just me. I'm real sorry you saw it too. Friend, I don't want to be seeing through my parts. I'd just as soon—aw, now look at that!"

Tomm saw it. He was peering right at one of the filmy folk as he lugged a load of poles across the flats. He was there, then he wasn't there at all. Something shivered, something quivered beneath his feet, and he was gone.

"I feel I just seen a Grinder," said the Grizz, his eyes big as supper plates.

"Yes. I'm afraid you did. Gordak, we've *got* to get out of this place."

"You said that once. It doesn't make sense to be saying it again. . . ."

Nadalia seemed to be expecting them. Before they reached the encampment she was there—gliding, weaving, whirling along, whatever it was she did. Tomm guessed she was somewhat out of sorts, for she flickered like a swarm of angry bees.

"Tomm. I told you to go away. You are not away, you are here. Why is this so? Go away again. Go away and be with your kind."

"My kind were not happy to see us. My kind are sullen and incredibly rude. Nadalia, I don't know where I am, I don't know what to do. Just tell me, please, how to get back where we belong."

Even though he could see right through her, Tomm was certain she had shown him a most bewildered look.

"You don't know where you are? This is true?"

"Of course it's true. I don't know where I am. I don't know who you are, I don't know what you do."

"We do what we do, Tomm."

"No, that won't cut it. Look. What did *you* do—you, personally, before you did this?"

"Before what?"

"When you—before you grew up. When you were little. What did you do then?"

"Little?"

"Little."

"No one is *little*. Why would one would wish to be little, Tomm?"

Tomm took a deep breath. "Nadalia—How do I look? Me, and my friend. How do we look to you?"

"Dense."

"Dense?"

"Yes. There is too much of you. Why would you want to have all that?"

"That's the way we are. We—"

"How do I look to you, Tomm?"

The question took him by surprise. "Why, you are quite different, Nadalia. Less dense, of course. More of the transparent persuasion than the folk where we come from, but I have to say I think you look very nice. Truly I do."

"Thank you. I have to say I think you look solid, thick, lumpy. Jammed, crammed and exceedingly—dense. Get out of here, Tomm, and you too, though I cannot recall your name."

"Gordak," said the Grizz. "And I can't remember yours."

With a hum, with a waver and a blink, she turned and she was gone. . . .

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### Eight

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Tomm and the Grizz sat well away from the camp. Close enough to see, but far enough away keep Nadalia off their backs. She might be attractive, in a willowy, diluted sort of way, but she clearly didn't want them around.



Tomm watched the filmy creatures dart about. They seemed to be in a hurry, a scurry, a great agitation. Something had stirred the fellows up.

The knobby poles and the raggedy tents seemed different somehow, as if by fate, by no intent, by sheer accident, some meaning, some pattern to this chaos was about to come about. A tent split asunder, ripped in two, then four after that, then four became eight. Some were dark as pitch, some were smeared with dull, ashen shades of gray.

Frail, thin-spun creatures dashed about these colorless displays—apparently doing nothing useful at all.

"I'm bedamned if I know what to make of all that," Tomm said. "I have never witnessed such bizarre behavior before."

Gordak scratched his ample belly and gazed across the flats. "Isn't just one of 'em, either. The whole lot of 'em is doing it now."

The Grizz was surely right. At every campsite, the foggy crews were in a whirl, in a blur, working in a frenzy to move their shabby goods from one spot to the next.

What was it all about? Tomm wondered. And why did this image, this reflection of the familiar, impart such a strange and frightful air?

So intent were the pair on the chaos across the boring plain, they failed to see the visitors until they were simply there.

The same sad four: Naked, scrawny, and, if possible, uglier than before.

"You. You an' the shaggy," said the man with scarcely a head. "You got to gos. Can't be stayin' heres."

"And why would that be?" asked Tomm.

"You're two. Gotta bes four."

"Look. We've heard all this before. We're two, and that's all we're ever going to be."

This seemed to puzzle the speaker. "Got to gos, you hear? Can't be two, got to be *four*."

"Isn't ever two," said another.

"Isn't what we do," said another still.

"What we always be doin' before," said the last, whose private parts had nearly disappeared.

"We don't wish to talk with you," said the Grizz. "Get back an' do what you do. Don't be coming 'round here."

Gordak was a prominence, exceedingly immense, but he didn't seem to impress this crew at all.

"You can't be messin' stuff up," the leader said. "Gots to be leavin' things like they are."

"No offense, but you're all quite mad, daft, totally deranged," Tomm said. "Can't blame you, fellows, I'd be insane too, if I'd been stuck in this place. Still . . ."

"Tomm . . ."

"Just a moment, not quite through. As my friend suggested, do what you do. Leave us alone, and we won't bother you."

"Tomm!"

Tomm was more than a little annoyed, for the Grizz had no concept of manners. Still, there was nothing for it but to turn and take a look.

At first, he was certain the strange rules of nature were playing tricks upon his eyes. Another group of four was coming toward him across the flats. No, make that four groups of four. Eight, then. Eight sets of uglies. Eight, sixteen, and a great deal more . . .

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## Nine

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A chill ran up Tomm's spine, took one look, and ran down again. There was no use counting. The ghastly plain was dark with naked, flawed quartets. A crush, a throng, an unruly horde of the pitiful creatures were closing in fast, their target clearly Tomm and the Grizz. Tomm noticed there were raggedy Newlies among them now—Mycers, Snouters, and such, who had also fallen victim to this wretched snare.

"I don't see why we can't settle this among ourselves," Tomm said, glaring at the group close by. "There's no need to bring in everyone else."

"There's a fair lot of 'em, but most of them don't have all their parts." Gordak gave a deep and hearty laugh. "I think I can—*wuuuuk!*"

Before he could finish, the unwholesome four were on him like a swarm of mindless ants, clawing, kicking, pounding their fists upon his hide. At first, Gordak easily slapped them off, brushing them aside with little effort at all. Still, this brave assault had turned the advancing horde into a frenzy. Now, there seemed no end to the creatures, and soon one could not scarcely see the Grizz, for the swarm that threatened to smother and bring him down.

Standing back to back with his friend, Tomm did all he could do to keep his assailants away. He kicked, caught one

on the chin, another in a nearly vanished crotch. He used his heavy case as a weapon, knocking the creatures to the ground.

Still, as gaunt and weak as their foes might be, it was clear that numbers would eventually bring the pair down.

"We can't stand still," Tomm shouted. "Keep moving, head for Nadalia's caravan, shake 'em off, friend!"

The Grizz didn't answer, but he gave a mighty roar and shook a dozen raiders free. It was a chance, the best they had, Tomm knew. The uglies wouldn't go near the "demon folk"—the shimmery creatures scared them out of their wits.

Tomm's strength was lagging, but he gave it all he could. He booted one foe, brought his case up in a wicked hook, and smashed another to the ground.

Two surly louts came at him at once. Tomm knocked the first one aside. The second was nearly clear as glass. Tomm gave a shudder at the sight. Whatever happened, he would never become a creature like that. Never, no matter what.

He heard Gordak, but didn't turn around. A foe came at him from behind. Tomm threw him off, struck him, and sent him sprawling.

His foes were thinning now, dashing at him, then quickly jumping back. Tom nearly shouted in relief. A cluster of shaky poles, a maze of shredded tents.

He laughed, for he was right. The packs of four wouldn't follow him here. The filmy folk might chase the pair away, but at least they could stop and catch their breath.

Tomm stopped, turned on his heels. "Gordak! Here!"

On the plains behind him was a scattering of the fours, coming to their feet, scrambling about. But Gordak wasn't there. The Grizz was nowhere in sight....

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## Ten

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He was struck dumb, stupefied and stunned. Gordak, gone! Lost somewhere among the pitiful souls who waited for Tomm's hide not a dozen yards away.

And, all around him now, gauzy creatures, flickers of light, their high-pitched chitter harsh as fingernails, the shatter of crystal glass. They swirled about him in restless array, shrieking:

*"Out, out—back with the thickies, back with the lumps—back with your own kind!"*



Tomm tore through chaos, bedlam and alarm, scattering wisps this way and that. Shouted for Nadalia, searched every quiver, every blink, every slim mirage.

And, as he dashed through the camp and out the other side, he was certain, not sure at all, that he caught a splash of color in the corner of his eye, a spatter of red, a tiny smudge of green. Only, color didn't live in this misbegotten world, so what could that mean?

There were packs of four on the flats, but not enough to count, and Tomm outran them all. That would work once, but next time they'd ring a camp solid, and quickly bring him down.

The second encampment was much like the first. Poles all a-slant, gaudily-painted flats stretching this way and that—a riot of blue, citron, violet and pink.

*Violet . . . pink?*

Tomm stopped in his tracks, flinging off the testy swarm of filmies that were on him like furious shards of light. Why had he never noticed any other hues but soot, mud, and gray before? A speck or two at the last encampment, yes, he might have imagined that—but not this!

And, in a single blink, in a flare, in a wink, he saw the frail, thin-spun creatures around him were no longer dull as lint, for now they were clad in bright, outrageous shades—striped, spotted, dressed in wild array, their flicker-faces masked under frightening display—monsters, demons, beasts that never were, horrid things distorted and deformed in every way.

Costumes, masks, and painted sets . . . it struck Tomm at once, struck him clean and clear: *A play, a mummery, an act upon a stage! Of course, what else could it be?*

"No!" he said aloud, tossing the thought aside as quickly as it had come, "I'd make them actors, a troupe of players, in a world that was real. But I'm bedamned if I know what to make of such behavior here. . ."

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## *Eleven*

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There was, in truth, something more worrisome about the filmy folk than body, than mass, something that tugged at faint remembrance, something dark and undefined. . .

"And *that* is patently ridiculous."

Tomm said aloud, "for there's nothing to fear from these babbling shards of light.

"What I need to do is get clear of this herd of vapors and go and find Gordak now."

He was greatly concerned about the Grizz. What if he'd been maimed, or even slain by those ignorant, naked louts?

Tomm fought the creatures, batted them away. Still, the more he swatted and batted and cuffed, the more they jeered and whirled about, leered in their horrid masks, in their multi-colored garb.

He felt as if he were fighting a sheer and awesome force that bore him down, overwhelmed him, carried him along through their wildly-painted sets.

And, of a sudden, those grim, half-forgotten memories were no longer undefined. Now, they were fearsome things that had long lain hidden in the dark, musty corners of his mind. No illusions now, no shabby mummies' masks, no clownish disarray. Now these horrors grabbed him by his heels, dragged him down

down

down

*down into the dark and lifeless landscape of every child's fears, horrors in the closet, chittery, slithery things that lurked beneath the bed, lurked and hunched and waited till little boys and girls could no longer hold their breath, waited till they dared to close their eyes . . . waited, waited till mommies and daddies were asleep and could no longer hear their cries. . .*

*Then, with a thump and a clump and a terrible bump, a moist and awful thing that was not a hand at all, something like a pincer, something like a claw, slicked out from under the bed to snip-snip-snip off those tiny little toes. . .*

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## *Twelve*

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Tomm screamed and thrashed, threw himself about, knew it finally had him after all this time because he couldn't hold his breath, because he had to close his eyes. . .

"Tomm . . . you simply must stop this right now. Stop it, do you hear?"

Tomm sat up straight. He could smell his own sweat, he could taste his own fear. No more monsters about, no more dreadful masks—only a colorless sky that was never day or night. The sky, the

shimmery shape of Nadalia, and behind her a maze of torn and faded flats.

"I told you, Tomm. I said, go away now, don't stay here. Go over there, with your own kind, go where you belong. . ."

Tomm scarcely heard her. "I was right," he said, staring about in horror, seeing this world as he'd never seen it before.

"I thought I was wrong, but I was right. You are mummies after all, but of a most fearsome, dreadful kind! Nadalia, this is a vile thing you do—these horrid plays your folk perform! Why, why in all reason?"

"No one asked you to come here, Tomm." He could almost imagine her quivery form gave an irritating shrug. "No one asked your—dense and lumpy sort to come from your place to ours."

"No one asked you to do the terrible things you do. No one asked you to send your terrors, your mares of the night, to rob our peaceful sleep!"

Tomm tried to stand, but the memory, the darkness that had touched him had numbed all his limbs, drained him of his strength. It took every effort to bring himself to his knees.

"At least you can tell me. Why do your people do this? Why, Nadalia? Why do such a hurtful thing?"

"What we do is what we do. What we have ever done."

"Yes, but—"

"Why do the thick folk do as they do? This *sleeping* thing, Tomm? If you didn't do that, we wouldn't have to bother, don't you see? I'm really quite certain you started this, not us."

"Now, will you go? You are a great disturbance here. You are not supposed to do this sort of thing, you—"

"No, no I won't," Tomm said, springing to his feet, with sudden decision, shaking off the dizzy dregs, "I've heard enough, I'm not *listening* to this!"

And, before Nadalia could even think about winking out of sight, he grabbed her up, bolted past the startled filmy folk, and burst out onto the flats.

Nadalia squirmed, squealed, shrieked with a resonance that set Tomm's nerves on edge. She was a dazzle, a flare, an armful of stars. Rainbow static, a sackful of iridescent eels.

Yet, he had to admit, holding Nadalia was not unpleasant at all.

"You'd best let me go," Nadalia said. "You'll get into trouble if you don't."



"I don't think so," said Tomm. "I think I'll stay out of trouble as long as I have you!"

Nadalia shouted some abuse, but Tomm didn't hear, for the horde was upon him the moment he appeared. One pack of four, then another after that. A mob, a mass, a multitude stumbled across the flats in their awkward, oafish gait.

Mostly, it seemed they were former human folk, but Tomm saw an incomplete Snouter in the bunch, and a Bowser who was nearly as sheer as Nadalia herself.

Closer, closer they came, thirty feet, twenty, ten—

The front ranks came to a wrenching stop, spilling the louts at their backs. Tomm nearly laughed aloud, for he was right as he could be. The "thickies" were terrified of even one of the filmy folk in their midst.

"Stand aside," Tomm warned them, "or I'll toss her at you right now."

With that, he raised his squirmy burden high. The poor brutes howled and shrank back.

"Tomm," Nadalia said, "take me back, take me back now."

"Don't worry, they won't come near. You've scared the fellows to death."

"Tomm, listen to me."

One of the creatures took a bold step, egging the others on.

Tomm didn't fear them, but he took a step back, as it seemed the prudent thing to do.

"Tomm . . ."

The braver fellow screamed at the others, determined to make them move.

"They're bluffing," Tomm said.

"There's one in every mob. He won't go, but he wants the others to. He—*uuuuukk!*"

The ground began to quake, shake. Tomm went sprawling, landed with a blow that took his breath away. For a moment, he thought he'd lost Nadalia. She was still there, a billion shards of lightning, squirming against his chest.

"I told you. You wouldn't listen, you're stubborn and you're dense, like all of your kind."

"Look, I stumbled. Everybody stumbles sometime."

The mob of uglies roared, surging forward with a will.

"I'll be all right. My—foot's caught on something. Can't shake it free."

"Grinder."

"What?"

"You can't move, because you backed into a Grinder. Do you recall what I said? I said, listen to me, Tomm. That's what I said."

Tomm felt a moment of cold, unremitting horror. He wasn't just stuck, he was *moving* now—that terrible creature was dragging him back, sucking him down.

He could feel his feet going, his legs after that. He tried to hang on, but there was nothing there to hold.

"You might as well quit. No one has ever gotten away from a Grinder. It's really better if you just fall in—most people don't slide, that was a foolish thing to do."

"Yes, I can see how that would be."

Tomm felt something hard, something solid against his chest, knew it couldn't be Nadalia, who wasn't solid at all. Knew it was the magic case that was stuck there, kneading into his flesh, that there was nothing he could do to push it free.

"You can let *me* go now. There's no need for me to perish too."

"You're right, of course." He glanced up, saw the naked brutes were nearly on them now. The Grinder was doing all the work, and the brutes had courage to spare.

"I'd like to say it's been a pleasure knowing you, Nadalia. You and I come from different backgrounds, and our customs are not the same. Still, I feel we could overcome that if we only had the time. I mean, if you had time here."

"Well we don't, Tomm. You can let me go now."

"Well, then. Goodbye, Nadalia."

"I would say goodbye too, but we don't do that here."

"I quite understand."

"If we did, I think I would, though."

"I do appreciate that."

"Since we don't, Tomm—"

Her words were lost as a frightening roar echoed across the flats. Tomm looked up, startled. Gordak was stomping through the horde, flinging uglies this way and that. Some were bold enough to climb upon his back, but he shook them quickly aside.

"I'm bedamned if I thought I'd ever see you again, friend Tomm," said the Grizz.

"Just hang on, I'll get you out of there."

"I'm afraid it's little use, Gordak. Don't endanger yourself for me."

"That makes no sense at all. What else is there to do in this place? There's nothing to eat, nothing to drink, no place to go."

Gordak tossed a pack of brutes aside, squatted down, and grasped Tomm's arm in a mighty grip. The Grinder seemed to sense his presence, and pulled all the more.

"I hope you haven't forgotten I'm leaving," said Nadalia. "Will you tell your thick friend he's holding me too?"

"She's right, Gordak. I gave my word she could go."

"Stop gabbing, will you? I've got a grip now. It's weakening some, Tomm."

"No it's not. Let go of me, Gordak. Let go of me now."

"Isn't any nasty hole in the ground about to get the better of a Grizz?"

"Gordak!"

"I got you. I got you, Tomm."

"It's got me, you oversized fool. Let go!"

"We'll make it, don't you worry 'bout that."

"Gordak!"

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## Thirteen

Tomm landed hard again, landed on something that splintered, cracked. Looked up, squinted at a fierce, unfamiliar light, a ball of flame in a lovely blue sky.

Touched the worn planks of the deck, smelled the sea air.

Looked up again, saw Arrita D'Ameville ducking past the mizzen sail, coming on the run. She stopped, stared, and brought one hand to her lips.

"Well that is just dandy, Master Tomm. You scared the daylights out of me, disappearing like that. I do not care for frightful magic tricks, I am quite put out with that. Now I—"

Arrita turned pale for a moment, then her color returned with a fury that matched the anger in her eyes.

"I am gone two minutes, getting *help* for you, and I see you've found ample respite yourself. Just who, might I ask, is *that*?"

There had been no time to notice her before, but he clearly noticed her now. Nadalia was still quite willowy, and some-



what sheer, but she was getting dense quickly, and in all the right places, too.

"Wherever we are, I don't like it, Tomm. I feel thick. I'd like to go back now."

"Just a moment, all right? We'll have to talk about this. Arrita, if I have caused you any alarm . . ."

"You have, indeed, caused the lady alarm, young man. From the start, I was certain you were not our kind. I am sure of that now."

Master Bursoni had appeared beside Arrita, and Tomm noticed he had wrapped a protective hand about her waist. He also raised an appreciative brow at Nadalia, whose slender form was beginning to appear.

"Master Bursoni says this is not a real ring, Tomm. He says, and I fear I agree, that magicians are no more than—well, merchant folk. *Sales persons*, if you know what I mean."

"I don't like her, Tomm," said

Nadalia. "She's really quite thick."

"I most certainly am not!"

"Both of you, please."

A bolt of lightning cracked overhead, and thunder rolled across the sky. Gordak fell out of nowhere, his great bulk a blur as he splintered the deck, and vanished out of sight.

Arrita cried out. Master Bursoni took occasion to wrap another hand about her waist.

Gordak came up through the ruined deck and grinned at Tomm. "You were right as you could be, friend. I never tackled anything as tough as that. Wouldn't want to grapple with the creature again."

He blinked at Nadalia, and turned his gaze on Arrita, Bursoni, and a grim-faced, whiskered officer who had arrived on the scene.

"Captain Klaw, I think I can explain this," Tomm said, "though it might take some time."

"I don't care to hear it. I cannot tolerate disturbance aboard my ship. You and your—companions, will be put ashore at once, and needless to say, I will not refund your passage, sir."

"Hear, hear," said Master Bursoni.

"You've brought this on yourself, I fear, Master Tomm," Arrita sighed. "I feel I must say I no longer welcome your attentions. I have already discarded your rather tacky ring."

Tomm heard thunder again, and looked out over the sea. One of the

naked uglies splashed into the water, then another after that. Then, a nearly transparent fellow, a hapless mummer who likely had nothing to do with the matter at hand. All three, after a flutter and sputter, began to swim for the shore.

Tomm laughed aloud. Here, then, right before his eyes, was the answer to a mystery that had puzzled scholar and commoner alike for countless years. People vanished all the time, for no reason anyone could see. Clearly, there were something like Grinders on *this* side as well. Folk from here got stuck over there. And, doubtless, the other way around.

Quite likely, he decided, there were lots of slim people about who suddenly learned there were days and nights, and clocks all around. And now had frightening dreams as well.


Tomm grinned at Gordak, reached down and picked up his magic case, and threw it as far as he could.

The case hit the water, leaving a ripple that soon disappeared.

Arrita gave a little fright, as if she might faint in Master Bursoni's arms.

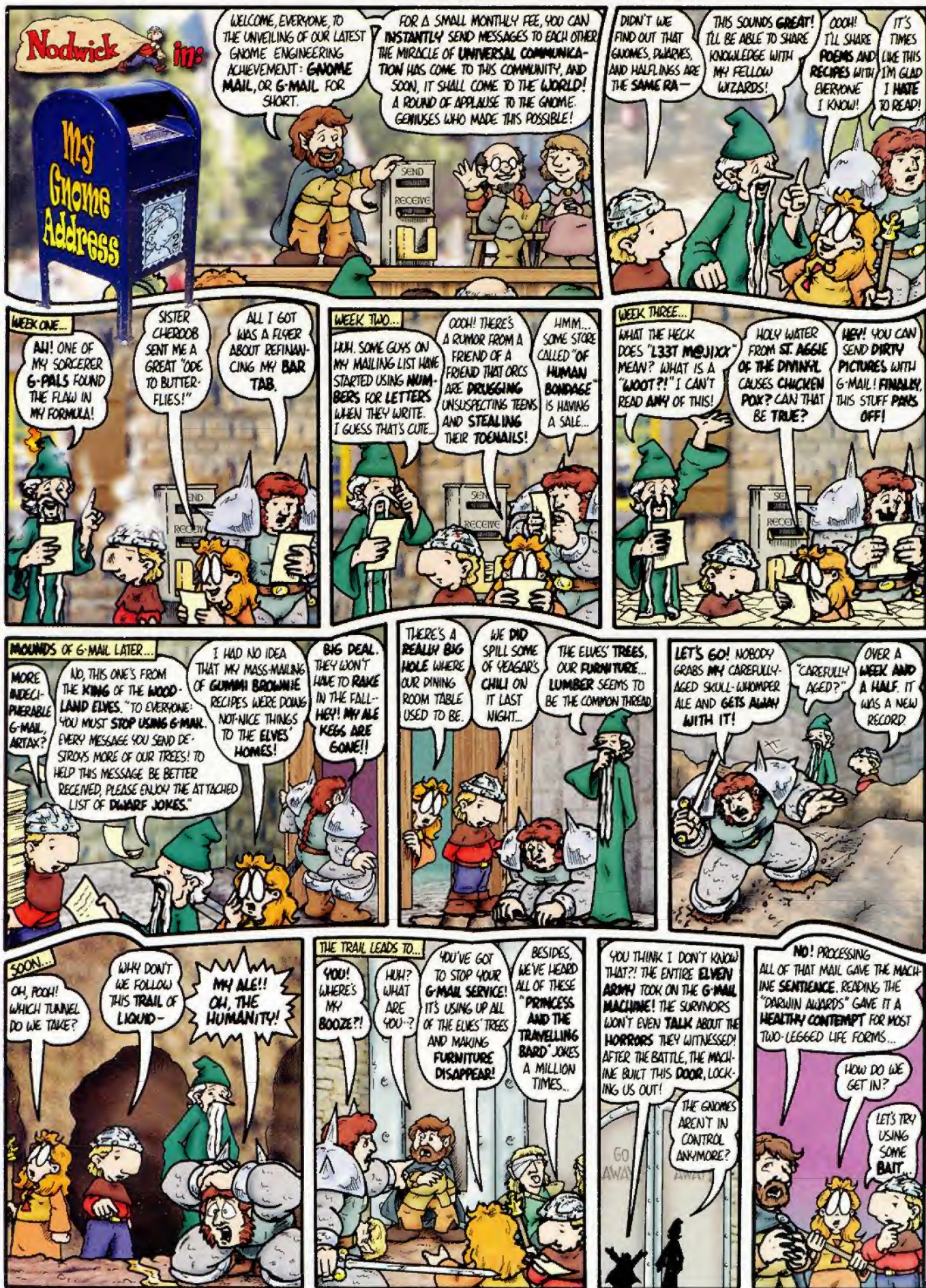
"I'll hold you to that threat of getting us ashore," Gordak told Captain Klaw. "I need a nap, and something solid to eat. I'm double-damned if you'll ever get me out of Grundakk Town again. Travel don't make any sense to me."

"I'm frightened, Tomm," Nadalia said. "This is a very peculiar world, indeed."

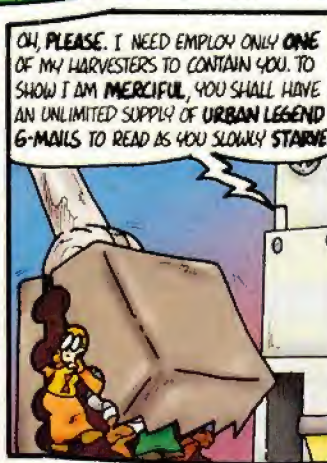
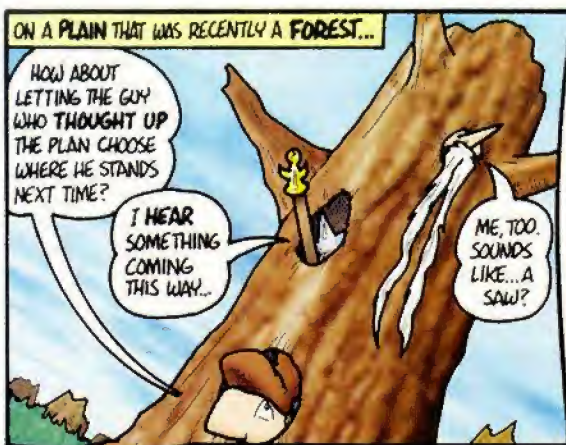
"I'll vouch for that," Tomm said, slipping an arm about an incredibly slender waist, "and you'll find, I can promise, it gets even more peculiar still. . . ." 













# Mind flayers

no.  
31

by Mike Selinker

Get ready for a fluency test. There are 32 D&D languages listed below, all from the *Player's Handbook* and *Monster Manual*. Their letters have been magically transformed into other letters, but there's a twist. The languages below are actually two separate word lists of 16 languages, each of which was encoded independently. Then the two lists were mixed together. So if A stands for Z in one entry, it'll stand for Z in exactly 16 entries—and probably for something else in the other 16. Hope you've got that *helm of comprehending languages and reading magic* handy!

E G T - Q T X V  
F S Y S B Q K X Y  
N P Y X X  
M K X D X Q P N  
O N T J  
L J M Y X R J S  
T E X G K P  
B M D K V C  
X Z G X V  
H Y S N  
W T N P K X V  
Y S W  
R H K S G J P  
L X Q P V R Y N  
F T P P T V  
E F K P - Z Q  
Z J S S K P  
K H V X V  
N Q K P Z  
T X K K R  
O N G K O K F  
F P R J S W Y C C Y P  
X G N X V  
K V W S N V X Y  
Q N S X V Q  
R S K W Y P Q W  
G P A S N D G Y E  
S Y I S V  
H T A Y K V  
K L E T T K X  
X A T Y S Q D  
N P Y C J



## MIND BLAST

In the *Monster Manual*, what nine-letter word in the shield guardian's special qualities is one letter different from a word in the neighboring shambling mound's special attacks?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 105

no.  
30

## SOLUTION

The statements were made in this order: 6 (Eric), 3 (Alan), 1 (Nate), 8 (Ward), 5 (Eric), 4 (Eric), 7 (Ward), 2 (Barbra), and 9 (Nate). A fair amount of other chatter happened in between those statements.

Though not all the classes are listed, the names lead you to a cleric, a barbarian, a wizard, a paladin, and (though not a class) the Dungeon Master.

Alan, who played Arban the wizard, rolled an 18 initiative, but readied an action. His initiative dropped to 8. He cast his *silent image*, though not with the result he wanted since Alan didn't understand the rules for standard actions.

Nate, who played Palin the cleric, rolled a 13 initiative. He uninspiringly cast *sanctuary* on himself, and then went after the Chee-Tos.

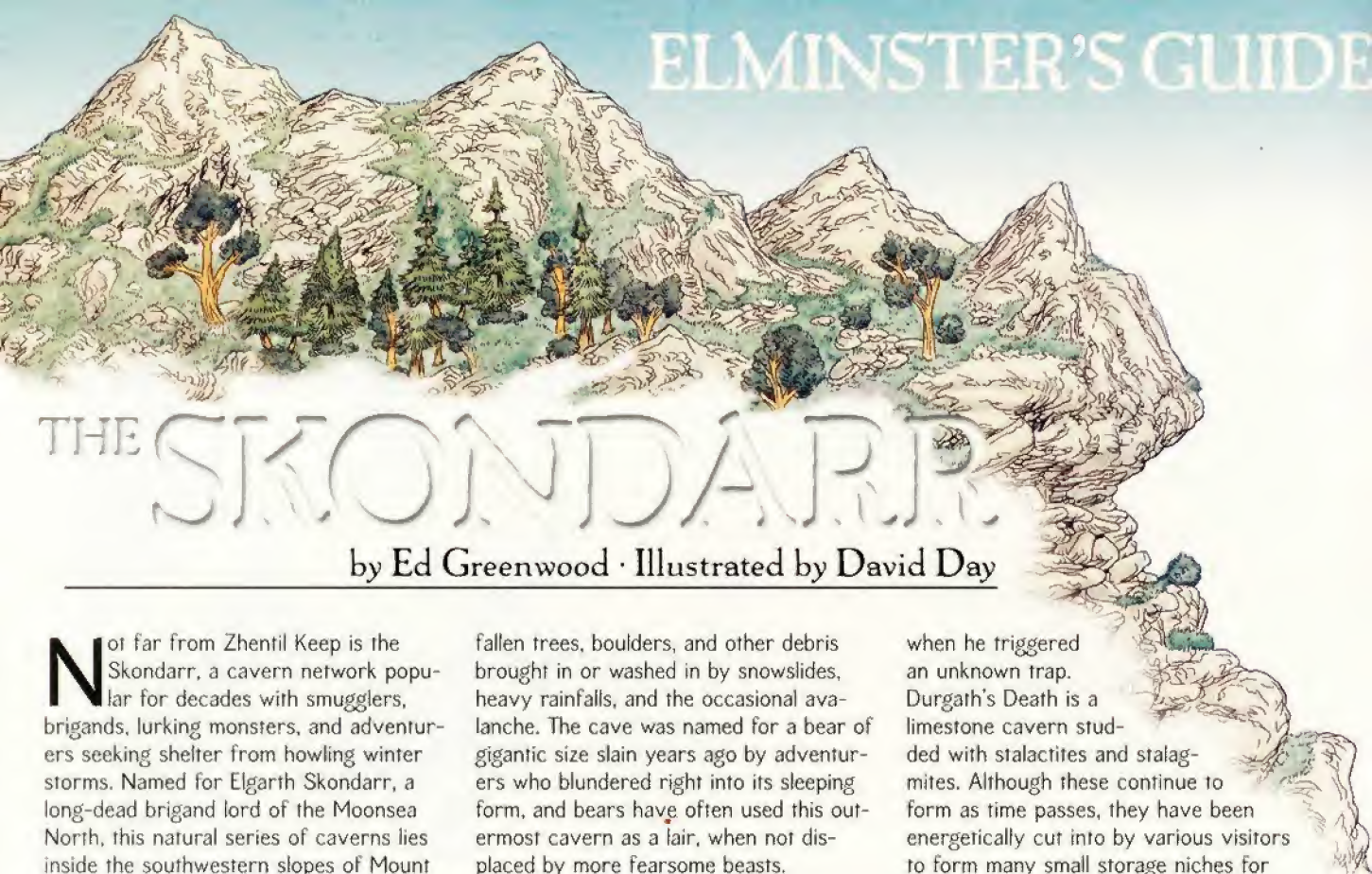
Ward, who played Ugnast the barbarian, rolled a 9 initiative. He moved and attacked Isar (but could not take a five-foot step afterward).

Eric, the Dungeon Master, rolled a 7 for Isar the bugbear's initiative (which now goes after Arban's 8). Isar flattened Ugnast.

Barbra, who played Ceri the paladin, rolled a 4 initiative. She used her *lay on hands* ability on Ugnast.

Nate then came back with the Chee-Tos.





# THE SKONDARR

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

Not far from Zhentil Keep is the Skondarr, a cavern network popular for decades with smugglers, brigands, lurking monsters, and adventurers seeking shelter from howling winter storms. Named for Elgarth Skondarr, a long-dead brigand lord of the Moonsea North, this natural series of caverns lies inside the southwestern slopes of Mount Tesh, north of Teshwave and northwest of Zhentil Keep.

Skondarr ruled a large territory, roaming with his band of hardened warriors from stronghold to stronghold, and the caverns that now bear his surname composed one of his larger holds. Just who or what is inhabiting the Skondarr varies over time, as do particular traps and treasures, but a tour of its salient features follows.

As one descends from its mountainside entrance, the Skondarr begins with Dead Bear Cave, a cavern usually choked with

fallen trees, boulders, and other debris brought in or washed in by snowslides, heavy rainfalls, and the occasional avalanche. The cave was named for a bear of gigantic size slain years ago by adventurers who blundered right into its sleeping form, and bears have often used this outermost cavern as a lair, when not displaced by more fearsome beasts.

Several adventuring bands that explored the Skondarr recently have reported finding runes or symbols scratched in the sand of particular ledges on the walls of Dead Bear Cave. These are simple markings made with fingers, sticks, or blades, and they change from time to time, seeming to be an active, ongoing means of communication.

The next cavern in from Dead Bear is Durgath's Death, so-called because a garulous, wild-bearded prospector and adventurer by the name of Durgath met his doom therein over half a century ago

when he triggered an unknown trap. Durgath's Death is a limestone cavern studied with stalactites and stalagmites. Although these continue to form as time passes, they have been energetically cut into by various visitors to form many small storage niches for flasks, coffers, daggers, and the like. These storage hollows are obvious to anyone entering the cave, and from time to time some of them have borne cryptic labels, such as "Berith" and "Hooks" and "The Best." The containers in Durgath's Death have been found to contain kindling, nails, coils of fine wire from Calimshan, rings, keys, and scrolls.

Beyond Durgath's Death lies another, larger limestone cavern known as The Altar. So far as is commonly known, no formal consecration to any faith has ever been made in this cave, although

## ELMINSTER'S NOTES

### DEAD BEAR CAVE

The sand-scratched symbols are signals from one thief to another. Although the code is constantly changing, I know five of them, thus:

- A triangle with a single dot in its center means "mission accomplished; meet at the usual place."
- A triangle with two dots in its midst means "complication with mission; use fallback plan."
- A circle with a triangle in it means "we have been found out; use full passwords."
- A circle with a dot in it means "we have been found out; break off mission."
- A circle with two dots in it means "great peril or opportunity; meet at the agreed-upon place as swiftly as possible."

If these symbols are accompanied by a second symbol, it usually identifies a meeting-place or rendezvous, often by a simple pictograph like a single tree, a cave mouth, a well, a candle to denote a particular building, a horse to denote a stable, or a wavy line topped by a straight horizontal line to denote a bridge.

### DURGATH'S DEATH

Among the treasures lying in the hollows of this cavern are a complete set of keys to the Royal Palace in Suzail. Last time I looked, there were also scrolls for the arcane spells *spectral hand*, *charm monster*, and *eyebite*, but these things seem to disappear swiftly when adventurers happen by.

### THE ALTAR

This cavern was often used for the worship of Malar, but these blood-sacrifice rituals ceased when the wizard Tharaundarr of Calaunt, enraged by the loss of his favorite hunting cat, slew all the cult members. There's seldom anything of interest to be found here today, but individual Malarites occasionally slaughter beasts here in the name of their god, a practice that attracts carrion crawlers and worse monsters.

### THE HIDEHOLE

The symbols scratched on the ledge are the sigils of long-ago mages: two triangles touching points within a circle belonged to Thamburkh of Athkatla, and the staring eye trailing three tears was the

mark of Dathlarra of Iriaebor. Once, they were sigils of power that allowed those who touched them properly to teleport to the home of the wizard who taught both mages, but now the magic has faded.

### CORONAL'S DOOM

The name of this cavern was indeed born of its use by a cabal plotting the death of someone—but their intended victim was the head of a Zhent human family known as "Coronal" (a human surname borrowed, with the arrogance typical of the human species, from the elf rulers of Cormanthor). The cabal succeeded not only in slaughtering their quarry, but his entire family, looting his cache of wealth before burning his grand mansion in Zhentil Keep. The cache was all gems, which they brought to the Skondarr—and then slew each other in squabbles over; it's thought that many of the stones still lie hidden elsewhere on the Tesh mountainside, not far from these caverns.

### HORTHAL'S NECK

The holes in this shaft contain many traps, which are constantly changed over time as various individuals



# TO THE REALMS

Lost places, familiar haunts, and strange rites in the lands of Faerûn

the reason for its name is clear enough. A huge, flat-topped boulder (suitable for use as an altar or feasting table) lies in the center of the cavern. It is a dark rock, not limestone, and its presence is a mystery.

A cramped but readily climbable, rough-walled fissure in the ceiling of The Altar leads up into the Hidehole. The Hidehole has been used by many as a defensible sleeping and storage area, and it often contains both guards and treasure; it's easy for someone waiting up here to inflict slaughter on climbers with stones or cross-bow bolts. This small, rough-walled cavern contains two features of interest: a water seep that drips drinkable (but horribly mineral-tainted) water into a hollow that can serve as a drinking bowl or washbasin and a ledge high up on the wall, where a man of average height (or any smaller being) who lies flat can rest unseen by persons entering the Hidehole. This ledge has often been used to launch deadly attacks on intruders, and it bears two curious symbols scratched in the rock at one end.

Less agile intruders typically pass on from The Altar to another cavern, reached through a gap in one wall. This third limestone cavern is Coronal's Doom—a curious name because (so far as is known) no Coronal has ever been slain by any creature having anything to do with the Skondarr. Perhaps "Coronal's Doom" was the name of a renegade elf band from Cormanthor that opposed the rule of the Coronals and left messages or items for each other in this cavern.

The walls of Coronal's Doom are lined with many narrow cracks and fissures, most far too small to hide anything but

insects and creeping worms. A few have, however, held scrolls and maps from time to time. The floor of Coronal's Doom holds its most prominent feature: the shaft known as Horthal's Neck that leads on to the lower caverns of the Skondarr.

Horthal's Neck earned its name because the once-notorious adventurer Horthal died here some eighty summers ago, breaking his neck in a fall from a rope partway down the shaft. Some say he was the victim of treachery, but others say he fell victim to a trap. The walls of the Neck are studded with scores of storage holes and niches—but many hold deadly traps that await the unwary.

From the floor of Coronal's Doom, the Neck descends over eighty feet before it opens out into the ceiling of Wyvernbone Pit.

The Wyvernbone Pit might once have contained the bones of a wyvern, but humans provided the bones that it's strewn with now. (Some tales insist these remains sometimes whirl up to form flying skeletons that attack intruders.) A long, low-ceilinged cavern rather than a pit, Wyvernbone descends to the short, aptly-named passage of Dunsral's Stair (whose floor consists of a series of step-like ledges, and which is often home to clouds of small, harmless black bats), which in turn leads down into The Vault of the Crown.

The Vault is a tall, upright-egg-shaped cavern bristling with stalactites and stalagmites, with a floor of wet sand. It's named for a curious apparition that appears in it from time to time: a glowing crown of white light—a radiance that takes the shape of a circlet topped with

many slender upswept spires of irregular lengths. This phantom crown is intangible, and it moves about the Vault as if someone of about six feet in height is wearing it and taking an interest in intruders and their deeds. The crown or its unseen wearer seem to have no hostile or malicious intent. On rare occasions, many small, star-like motes of twinkling white light emerge from the spires of the crown and drift around the Vault, only to fade away again. These pinpoints of light never leave the Vault and have no effect on magic or creatures they touch (they pass through solid objects, and living creatures feel no sensation from such contacts).

The Vault opens—via a short, nameless chute—into Darkpool Delve. This half-flooded cavern was thought by many to be a flooded dwarven mine, with riches waiting for those who dared to venture beneath the inky waters into water-filled passages below, but in truth it has never been more than a natural sump, and no dwarven hammers have ever touched its bottom or the surrounding stone.

The water is cold and a menacing inky black in hue—thanks to a harmless algae that grows there—but quite drinkable. Even in its shallowest spots, the water is deep enough to hide an upright human. Although creatures are seldom encountered in these lightless depths, all manner of items—from treasure and useful items to drowned corpses and refuse—are often found here. It most often serves as a dumping-ground for items folk desire to remain hidden.

11

and groups use the Skondarr as a hideout. Many contain poison needle traps for searching hands to find, but traps of poison gas and even spells triggered by intrusion have been encountered.

Typical items stored in the Neck's holes include wands, potions, stolen purses full of coins, and rarer things, such as maps, spell scrolls, and deeds to valuable properties in Suzail, Selgaunt, and Yhaunn.

#### WYVERN BONE PIT

The bones won't animate without the usual sort of spells being cast on them, but skeletons have been animated here in the past. There's seldom anything of interest in the Pit except whatever items a corpse might be wearing or carrying; this tends to be the part of the Skondarr where refuse of all sorts ends up. There are rumors—which I believe—of a portal to the Underdark that opens here at random times.

#### DUNSRAL'S STAIR

Named for a gnome adventurer who was famous in his day, this passage once contained a stair crafted by Dunsral himself. Nowadays, all traces of

Dunsral's construction are gone, and rough, crumbling steps have been hewn here and there out of the rock. The bats are harmless (bitter-tasting if fried on skewers, by the way), but on more than one occasion, powerful magic-using creatures have hidden among them by taking bat shape—so beware any bat that is larger than the rest, no matter how much care they take to stay hidden.

#### THE VAULT OF THE CROWN

The crown apparition is very old and, I believe, divinely powered. It defied my attempts to probe its origin and properties. It seldom appears on more than four occasions during a month, never for more than two hours at a time. Casting or unleashing powerful magic in the Vault seems to be the only trigger that causes the crown to appear, and it remains less than reliable. The appearance of the stars seems to herald the appearance of a magic item or spontaneous magical manifestation in the cavern (from what source, and for what reasons, remain mysterious). In the presence of the crown, spells seem to be boosted in damage or efficacy. Treasures are often buried in the wet sand floor.

Unless someone very persistent has spent hours digging, I know of at least three stolen chests full of Sembian coins that lie there.

#### DARKPOOL DELVE

The waters of the Delve can hold just about anything—and usually do, from small, lurking monsters to rich treasures. Among these, unless someone's found it and carried it off, is a throne that can be commanded to fly by anyone sitting on it.









# THE SKONDAR

- 1 **DEAD BEAR CAVE:** Often difficult to see from the outside, PCs within 5 feet of Dead Bear cave must make a Spot or Search check (DC 10) to discover the entrance. The Difficulty Class of the Spot check increases by +1 per 10 feet of distance between the PC and the caves.
- 2 **DURGATH'S DEATH:** The trap that killed Durgath still exists. An empty hollow, high on the south wall, still contains a flame jet trap (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, page 115) that activates when someone is unfortunate enough to reach inside. Once activated, the trap magically rearms itself one minute later.
- 3 **THE ALTAR:** The fissure in the ceiling of The Altar is difficult to spot (Spot check, DC 15) and nearly impossible to reach (Climb check, DC 30) without a rope hanging from above or magical aid.
- 4 **THE HIDEHOLE:** Climbing the fissure is relatively easy (Climb check, DC 10). The symbols in the back of the cave no longer have their original powers, but spiteful spellcasters have been known to cast spells there, such as *glyph of warding*, to harm the curious.
- 5 **THE CORONAL'S DOOM:** Some of the gems mentioned in Elminster's notes remain here. Time has made them difficult to find (Search check, DC 30), but three small rubies (worth 40 gp each) lie hidden in a dirt-filled crevice near the floor.
- 6 **HORTHAL'S NECK:** The many niches in the shaft make Horthal's Neck relatively easy to climb (Climb check, DC 15), but doing so puts the climber at risk of encountering one of the many magic and mechanical traps set there over the years.
- 7 **WYVERNBORE PIT:** An invisible, two-way portal to the Underdark opens here for 1 hour every 1d6 days, its opening heralded by a 15-foot swirl of light. Once used by Illithids from a now-ruined mindflayer city, now it is simply a hazard for those exploring the caves. For more information on portals, see the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*.
- 8 **DUNSRL'S STAIR:** Rivulets of water run down the Stair, making footing on the slippery limestone treacherous. A creature moving down the passage must make a Balance check (DC 17) or be unable to proceed that round. A failure by 5 or more results in the creature falling prone. A creature that succeeds can move at half speed. Creatures can choose to move faster (up to their normal speed), but suffer a -5 penalty to Balance checks.
- 9 **THE VAULT OF THE CROWN:** The chests of Sembian coins each contain about 200 gp in copper, silver, and gold pieces.
- 10 **DARKPOOL DELVE:** The water in the pool is too clouded and dark for any creature to see through. The throne hidden at the bottom functions exactly like a 3 foot by 5 foot carpet of flying.





CLASS ACTS:

# GNOME GIANT KILLER

by Andy Collins

illustrated by Scott Roller



In every gnome community, only a select few individuals of extraordinary courage take up the mantle of giant-killer. Relying on a combination of agility, combat prowess, and pure craftiness, the gnome giant-killer is the bane of all creatures who use their physical size to terrorize the small or weak. Champions of those far-too-often trampled underfoot, the gnome giant-killer stands far taller than his diminutive stature would suggest. As the ultimate believers that "the bigger they are, the harder they fall," these doughty warriors actively seek out ogres, trolls, giants, and the like to slay. Some also utilize their training to take on other immense opponents, such as umber hulks, monstrous vermin, and even dragons.

Most gnome giant-killers are fighters or rangers, although some gnome paladins and clerics also follow the path of giant slaying. Rogues who favor looting the dens of ogres and the like also become giant-killers. Monks make excellent giant-killers. Arcane spellcasters rarely take up this class, since it largely depends on toe-to-toe interaction with immensely powerful creatures.

Gnome giant-killer NPCs are often lauded as heroes or celebrities within gnome communities. They might serve as captains of the guard, elite warrior trainers, or in other positions of authority. Some pass down their mantle from generation to generation, granting the bravest son or daughter a treasured nickname such as "Trollbane" or "Giant-Crasher."



Those who work for their own purposes might still enjoy some measure of popularity but prefer to remain aloof from political venues in favor of pursuing personal gain. Of course, many look to adventure to prove their mettle; rare indeed is the gnome giant-killer who hasn't bearded his share of trolls or fire giants in their very lairs.

## CLASS FEATURES

All the following are class features of the gnome giant-killer prestige class.

### Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

Gnome giant killers gain proficiency with all simple and martial weapons, with light and medium armor, and with shields.

**Favored Enemy (Giant) (Ex):** At 1st level, the gnome giant-killer gains a +1 bonus to Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks made against giants and +1 to damage against giants (ranged attacks only gain the damage bonus against targets within 30 feet). This stacks with the ranger favored enemy class feature if giant is the ranger's favored enemy. This bonus increases by an additional +1 for every 3 levels above 1st (4th, 7th, and 10th).

**Crafty Fighter (Ex):** At 2nd level, the gnome giant-killer can add his Wisdom bonus to his AC against giants, or half his Wisdom bonus (rounded down) against any other (non-giant) creature at least two size categories larger than himself. This is considered a dodge bonus and is lost in any situation in which the gnome giant-killer would lose his Dexterity bonus to AC.

**Slippery (Ex):** Beginning at 3rd level, if the gnome giant-killer is grappled by a creature at least two size categories larger than himself, he can

add his gnome giant-killer class level to any checks (whether grapple checks or Escape Artist checks) made to escape grappling.

In addition, a gnome giant-killer can move through an area occupied by a creature two size categories larger than he is. This doesn't apply against creatures who completely fill their area, such as a gelatinous cube. (Normally, you can only move through an area occupied by a creature if it is at least three size categories larger than you are.)


**Close Shot (Ex):** At 5th level, the gnome giant-killer does not incur attacks of opportunity from giants for using a ranged weapon while threatened by them.

**Longstrider (Ex):** At 6th level, the gnome giant-killer's base speed increases by 10 feet.

**Improved Mobility (Ex):** At 8th level, a gnome giant-killer gains a +8 dodge bonus to his AC when moving out of or within a giant's threatened area. This supersedes (does not stack with) the bonus granted by the Mobility feat.

**Annoying Strike (Ex):** Beginning at 9th level, whenever the gnome giant-killer damages a giant in melee, that giant also suffers a -2 penalty to attacks for one round. The effect of multiple annoying strikes is cumulative.

**Defensive Roll (Ex):** At 10th level, the gnome giant-killer can roll with a potentially lethal blow struck by a giant to take less damage from it. Once per day, when a gnome giant-killer would be reduced to 0 hit points or less by damage in melee combat (from a weapon or other blow struck by a giant, not a spell or special ability), the gnome giant-killer can attempt

to roll with the damage. He makes a Reflex saving throw (DC = damage dealt; the gnome giant-killer can add his class level to this saving throw) and, if he's successful, he takes only half damage from the blow. He must be aware of the attack and able to react to it in order to execute his defensive roll—if he is denied his Dexterity bonus to AC, he can't roll. Evasion or improved evasion have no affect on the damage taken. 

## CLASS REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a gnome giant-killer, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5.

**Race:** Gnome.

**Escape Artist:** 3 ranks.

**Tumble:** 3 ranks.

**Feats:** Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack.

**Special:** Speak Language (Giant).

## CLASS SKILLS

The gnome giant-killer's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are:

**Str:** Climb, Jump.

**Dex:** Escape Artist, Hide, Move Silently, Tumble, Use Rope.

**Con:** —

**Int:** Craft.

**Wis:** —

**Cha:** Intimidate.

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2 + Int modifier.

## GNOME GIANT-KILLER

HIT DIE

D10

| Levels | Attack Bonus | Fort. Save | Ref. Save | Will Save | Special                                  |
|--------|--------------|------------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 1      | +1           | +2         | +0        | +0        | Favored enemy (giant) +1                 |
| 2      | +2           | +3         | +0        | +0        | Crafty fighter                           |
| 3      | +3           | +3         | +1        | +1        | Slippery                                 |
| 4      | +4           | +4         | +1        | +1        | Favored enemy (giant) +2                 |
| 5      | +5           | +4         | +1        | +1        | Close shot                               |
| 6      | +6           | +5         | +2        | +2        | Longstrider                              |
| 7      | +7           | +5         | +2        | +2        | Favored enemy (giant) +3                 |
| 8      | +8           | +6         | +2        | +2        | Improved mobility                        |
| 9      | +9           | +6         | +3        | +3        | Annoying strike                          |
| 10     | +10          | +7         | +3        | +3        | Favored enemy (giant) +4, defensive roll |

Regular Class Acts author, Marte Cook, will return in issue #293.



# Living Fireyhawk

*Journal*

*Praise Demogorgon  
the Death Knights Return!*

*Into the Isles of Woe!*

no. seven, Sunsebb 591 PY

 **RPGA**  
NETWORK





# Campaign News

## Woe to You, O Earth and Sea...

Forget Castle Greyhawk—the buzz among Flanaess adventurers in 592 CY will be the Isles of Woe. ORIGINS 2002 offers a special event in which the RPGA Network teams up with Dwarven Forge, makers of MasterMaze three-dimensional hand-painted dungeon environments, to present players with a massive exploration and crawl of these legendary lost islands. Get ready to test your LIVING GREYHAWK character's delving skill in the haunted halls of these submerged death traps. Also, test your painting skill, as we award prizes for the best-painted LIVING GREYHAWK character miniatures brought to the event!

Not able to make it to ORIGINS? No problem. A limited version of this event is scheduled for release for convention, game day, and home play. Stay tuned for details.

## What is Living Greyhawk?

LIVING GREYHAWK is the largest, most popular shared-world DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign in the history of gaming. Run under the auspices of the ROLE PLAYING GAMER ASSOCIATION Network (RPGA), the campaign offers gamers around the world the chance to contribute to the developing history of Oerth by taking part in scenarios played at conventions, game days, or in the comfort of home. For more information on how you can get involved in the campaign, visit [www.livinggreyhawk.com](http://www.livinggreyhawk.com).

### Something Missing from The Forbidden Choice?

Did you lose a part of you in COR1-07 *The Forbidden Choice*, by Chris Tulach and Jason Bulmahn? You put your hand in the urn, didn't you? Worry not! All is not lost, and neither is your appendage. The *disintegrate* function of the urn destroys only non-organic material—body parts, familiars, kid brothers, all can be placed in the urn

without ill effect. If your DM ruled you lost an organic bit, it is returned. To limit confusion, have your next DM note this on your campaign tracking sheet at the soonest possible opportunity (and show them this section of the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal*, just in case they haven't had a chance to see it). This is an official erratum, and the change appears in newer versions of the adventure.

## New Scenarios Now Available!

In the bustle to update you on the latest scenario offerings, we passed up a whole passel of fairly new scenarios you'll want to order. You can snag any one (or all) of these by visiting [www.livinggreyhawk.com](http://www.livinggreyhawk.com). Click on the "game play" line in the sidebar to get things started.

### COR1-05 *Brendingund's Bride*

by Sean Flaherty and John Richardson  
Auldon Brendingund is getting married, and you have been chosen to escort the groom to Hardby. All's not bliss, however. Even though Brendingund fortunes are in the black, his luck is still foul. Bleak swamps, a dwarven laird, and a strange necklace all stand in the way of the nuptials. Your aid will determine whether or not Brendingund remains a bachelor! Part II of the Brendingund Chronicle (sequel to *The Reckoning*). An Adaptable adventure for characters level 1-6.

### COR1-06 *The Forbidden Choice*

by Jason Bulmahn and Chris Tulach  
Thought lost to antiquity, the remains of an ancient elven chest have been recovered. Why is this relic so



Scaly death awaits you in one of these adventures. Which? Order and find out!

important that luz's followers would take interest in it? A Core adventure for characters level 1-6.

### COR1-07 *Bendingund's Blood*

by Sean Flaherty and John Richardson  
Auldon Brendingund needs you to assist him again. This time his wife has given birth to an "unexpected" child and he seeks your help to find the father. Part III of the Brendingund Chronicle. An Adaptable adventure for characters level 1-6.

### ADP1-09 *Sinkhole*

by Christopher Jensen  
Rumors have spread across the land of buried treasures found on an old widow's farm. They say that there are gems just lying in a sinkhole for the taking. It can't be that easy, can it? An Adaptable adventure for characters level 1-8.





## Are You Moving?

If you are moving in the real world, you can always hop over to the RPGA website ([www.wizards.com/rpga](http://www.wizards.com/rpga)) and change your address in the members-only section. But what about your LIVING GREYHAWK character? What does she need to do to switch regions?

Once a campaign year, including the first (591 CY), a character may switch regions at no Time Unit (TU) cost. If you desire your character to move more times a year, you can, but at a cost of 4 TUs for each move. You can pay the cost and switch regions as many times you are able, but you cannot go into a TU deficit to pay this cost. If you do not use your free move in a given campaign year, you cannot save it to use in future years; it is lost at the end of the game year.

Each character has 52 TUs to spend each campaign year on adventures and other activities. The 592 campaign year began on January 1, 2002, and all future campaign years begin on January 1 of the corresponding real-world year.

## Let Your Region be Your Guide for Guidebooks

Fans of the D&D class guidebooks rejoice! Their options now appear in the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign. Your Regional Triad, through meta-campaign activity offered at special events, will offer options from these books, following the guidelines found in campaign Rules Update 1 (RUP-1), which you can find on the RPGA Network Website (again, [www.wizards.com/rpga](http://www.wizards.com/rpga)).

RUP-1 also offers an expanded list of prestige classes you can take in the LG campaign, including those from the newly released *Song and Silence: A Guidebook to Bards and Rogues* and the soon-to-be released *Masters of the Wild: A Guidebook to Barbarians, Druids, and Rangers*. Check them out, and plan your character's progression.

## Viva Italia!

The LIVING GREYHAWK campaign staff would like to thank and congratulate the Italian Triad for the completion of the first two Italian language LIVING GREYHAWK adventures, both of which are now orderable from the RPGA Website.

The two Italian regional adventures, set in the Sea Barons, are titled SBN1-01 *Fiori Neri* and SBN1-02 *Nel Covo Dei Pirati*. If you live in Italy and you want some native language Greyhawk fun, order them today!

## Back Issue Bonanza!

RPGA HQ remains flush with back issues of the *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* just waiting to be added to your musty magazine collection. Plentiful quantities exist of stand-alone issues 1-4. These may be ordered by RPGA members in good standing at a cost of \$5.00 US each.

Not a member of the RPGA? Don't despair! Hop over to the RPGA website and sign yourself up. It costs five bucks, and you'll shortly be on your way to LIVING GREYHAWK goodness.

## Issue 5 Still Delayed

We get cracking on the "lost" *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* issue (#5) just as soon as this issue goes to press. Everyone who was a member of the RPGA in August (when it should have come out) will receive their issue shortly. Thanks for your patience! ★

DM: "Gee looks like you missed your **saving throw** ... again!"

Give your character what  
he deserves

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# Demogorgon's Champions

## The Death Knights of Oerth • Part Two

by Gary Holian • illustrated by Adam Rex

The dreaded St. Kargoth has terrorized the eastern Flanaess for centuries. The first of Oerth's death knights, Kargoth serves as the demon prince Demogorgon's most devoted Oerthbound champion and as a spiritual role-model for honorless knights throughout the old Great Kingdom (his fall from grace and transformation were recounted in last month's *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal*). St. Kargoth and his remaining twelve fiendish sires are described below, along with brief sketches of their personalities and goals. All these beings are more than 400 years old and are very powerful, experienced adversaries, easily the match of any elder vampire or lich. Their legend is a powerful force in the Great Kingdom and was exploited even by Overking Ivid V and his former court wizard, Xaene, with their creation of Knights of Doom, a pale mockery meant to evoke these ancient villains to frighten the populace. Though they have dispersed throughout the world over the centuries, Kargoth's death knights remain a potent threat to good-loving denizens of Greyhawk's world. All have unique agendas, often enjoying complex alliances with other powerful forces of darkness. They should make exceedingly formidable opponents for any group of adventurers who cross their paths. Most death knights are attended by all manner of undead, notably skeleton warriors and swordwraiths (who often serve as lieutenants and scouts). Some death knights maintain hidden strongholds, while others are wanderers, but all are compelled by their nature to increase the suffering of the world. Thanks to their undeath, they have forever to reach this goal, and savor every minute of the journey.

### St. Kargoth the Betrayer, CR 23

Male Half-Fiend, Half-Human Death Knight, 8th-Level Paladin/10th-Level Blackguard

|               |                 |      |                      |
|---------------|-----------------|------|----------------------|
| Strength      | 24              | (+7) | Fort. Save +20       |
| Dexterity     | 16              | (+3) | Ref. Save +17        |
| Constitution  | —               | (+0) | Will Save +18        |
| Intelligence  | 20              | (+5) | Alignment LE         |
| Wisdom        | 8               | (+4) | Speed 20 ft.         |
| Charisma      | 26              | (+7) | Size M (6 ft. 4 in.) |
| Hit Points    | 117             |      | Armor Class 33       |
| Melee Attack  | +25/+20/+15/+10 |      | Flat-Footed AC 30    |
| Ranged Attack | +21/+16/+11/+6  |      | Touch AC 14          |

### Most Common Attack

+5 longsword +31/+26/+22/+16, 1d8+12 (19-20/x2)

**Skills:** Climb +16, Concentration +14, Bluff +14, Diplomacy +21, Handle Animal +16, Hide +13, Intimidate +16, Jump +11, Knowledge (religion) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Listen +6, Ride +21, Spot +6.

**Feats:** Alertness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-by Attack, Spirited Charge, Sunder, Weapon Focus (longsword).

**Possessions:** +5 longsword, +5 full plate of shadow, Demogorgon's bilious sphere (see below), ring of protection +3, boots of speed, brooch of shielding, cloak of Charisma +4.

**Blackguard Spells** (3/3/3/2; base DC = 15 + spell level): 1st—inflict light wounds x4; 2nd—bull's strength, darkness x2, inflict moderate wounds; 3rd—contagion, deeper darkness x2, inflict serious wounds; 4th—freedom of movement, inflict critical wounds x2.

**Special Attacks:** Special damage—melee attacks cause 1 point of Constitution damage (Will save, DC 25 negates), melee touch attacks cause 1d8+5 points of damage +1 point of Constitution damage (Will save, DC 25 for half damage, negates Constitution damage); *abyssal blast* 1/day—1,120-ft. range, 20-ft.-radius spread, 1d6 fireball, damage is half-fire and half-divine, (Reflex save, DC 25 for half damage); fear aura—creatures of less than 5 HD within 15-ft. radius affected by fear as though cast by 18th-level sorcerer (Will save, DC 25 negates); *darkness*, *poison*, and *unholy aura* 3/day as though cast by 18th-level sorcerer; *desecrate*, *unholy blight*, *contagion*, *blasphemy*, *unhallow*, *horrid wilting*, and *summon monster IX* (fiends only) 1/day as though cast by 18th-level sorcerer; *detect good* at will; *summon monster I* 1/day as though cast by 20th-level sorcerer; *smite good* 2/day (+7 to hit, +10 points of damage); *command undead* 10/day as an 8th-level cleric; *sneak attack* 4d6.

**Special Qualities:** Undead, undead followers (6 wights mounted on skeletal horses), DR 15/+1, Immunities (cold, electricity, fire, polymorph), acid resistance 20, SR 28, summon mount (St. Kargoth rides a nightmare into battle. This nightmare is also his fiendish servant.), turn immunity (cannot be turned, *holy word* can dispel), dark blessing (Charisma bonus applies to saves), *lay on hands* 1/day (inflict 126 points on himself only), aura of despair (enemies within 10 ft. suffer a -2 morale penalty to saves), fiendish servant (see below).





## St. Kargoth's Fiendish Servant and Mount

**Nightmare:** CR 9; Large Outsider; Hit Dice 12d8+36; hp 92; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Speed 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (good); AC 29 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +18 natural); Atk 2 hooves +16 melee (1d8+5), bite +11 melee (1d4+2); Face 5 ft. by 10 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +16, Ref +10, Will +11; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 12.

**Skills:** Intuit Direction +19, Listen +21, Move Silently +20, Search +19, Sense Motive +19, Spot +21.

**Feats:** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

**Special Attacks:** Flaming hooves, smoke.

**Special Qualities:** Astral projection, etherealness, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, share saving throws, speak with blackguard, SR 15.

## Demogorgon's Bilious Sphere (major artifact)

This twisted iron rod is topped by the *Bilious Sphere*, an obscene parody of the *Orb of Sol*, the goodly artifact that played an important role in the formation of Kargoth's death knights and has vexed them ever since.

Demogorgon's bilious sphere bestows one negative level on any good creature attempting to wield it. The negative level remains as long as the rod is in hand and disappears when the rod is no longer wielded. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while the rod is wielded. Its other magical powers are as follows:

- **Acid:** Five times per day, the rod can be used as a +5 heavy mace that causes an extra 3d6 points of acid damage. Activating this power is a free action, and it works if the wielder strikes an opponent within 1 round.
- **Bile:** Five times per day, the rod can be used to cast *stinking cloud* as though cast by a 20th-level sorcerer.
- **Vitriol:** Three times per day, the rod can be used to cast *acid fog* as though cast by a 20th-level sorcerer.
- **Rancor:** Once a day, the rod can be used to create a feeling of intense hatred in a nearby creature. A single creature within 60 feet chosen by the rod's user must make a Will saving throw (DC 23) or view another creature within sight (chosen by the rod's user) as its most hated enemy. The target creature attacks this hated foe with the deadliest means available until the creature is dead or a full day of time elapses. The target creature attacks its hated foe heedless of danger, but in situations where death seems certain, the target creature attempts to avoid such a fate in the hopes of attacking the foe at a better time. Should the hated foe become *invisible*, *teleport* away, or otherwise flee, the target creature hunts the foe down to the best of its ability. For purposes of dispelling, this effect is treated as *dominate monster* cast by a 20th-level sorcerer.
- **Bilious Spheres:** Three times per day, the rod can be used to create three spheres of acid. This effect is as a *flaming sphere* spell cast by a 20th-level sorcerer with the following exceptions: three glowing green spheres of acid are created, the spheres cause acid damage instead of fire damage, and all the spheres can be moved individually with a single move-equivalent action.
- **Demogorgon's Favor:** This power can be invoked only by an evil wielder whom Demogorgon actually favors (such as







Kargoth). Once a day, the favored wielder can use the rod to gain immunity to acid for 1 hour, 4d12 temporary hit points that last 1 hour, a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength for 1 hour, and Damage Reduction 25/+5 for 1 hour.

St. Kargoth is the much reviled Lord of the Death Knights, the first and most powerful such being ever created by the forces of darkness. He is widely notorious for the depth of his infamous betrayal and the hatred he inspires in followers of goodness and light. He appears slightly larger and more fearsome than his compatriots, but has transcended their undead state through wanton accumulation of power and an incessant campaign of wickedness against the living. Kargoth's features are skeletal, his face glows a hideous green and his eyes gleam a fiery red. He wears ancient black armor and carries only the most powerful and fearsome blades available to him (such as the legendary sword *Shatterer*, now thankfully thought lost forever).

Kargoth began life as a widely admired paladin in the Great Kingdom, but a dark pact with the demon prince Demogorgon, whose cult was once profligate among the Ur-Flan of the eastern coast of the Flanaess, turned him completely to evil. He has long since abandoned his ruined castle Fharlanst, which was situated along the Aerdi coast between Roland and Winetha. Its walls were cast down by the siege engines of the Knight Protectors in 247 CY and the secrets of the fell place have been buried ever since. Many coastal peasants whisper that the dreaded knight now resides on the Isle of Cursed Souls, though in truth he has been spied only once near the northern coast, many decades ago on a night the Flan refer to as the festival of the Bloody Moon.

In the centuries since his rise to power, Kargoth has quickly ascended the ranks of the demonic hierarchy. Having long since departed the ken of mortals, his evil has spread to other planes of existence and his power now rivals that of many demon lords. While steeped in the intricate politics of the Abyss, he nevertheless willingly advances the interests of Demogorgon on this and other dimensionalities (in return, Demogorgon turned him over to his demonic surgeons, who through skin grafts and hideous transfusions managed to imbue Kargoth with fiendish essence). St. Kargoth still visits the material plane on rare occasions to wreak additional havoc in the name of chaos and to further his vengeance upon the kingdom of his birth. He has many enemies, not the least of which are the mysterious Whiteguard and the Lords of the Gloaming dedicated to Pholtus. He is greatly despised among the councils of the Balance and is still viewed as an archenemy by the surviving members of the Knight Protectors of the Great Kingdom. His rivalry with the patron of that order, St. Benedor of the Ashen Hand, is legendary.

Some debased humans worship Kargoth as a god, though they gain no spells for doing so. The Sunsebb Sodality, a very secretive cult of undeath, spreads its devotion among him and the other death knights. Devoid for the most part of any hierarchy or codified dogma, the chaotic cultists respect malevolence and above that only raw power (for which they lust). Kargoth cares little for this supplication, though he has been adopted as a saint by renegade elements of the Church of Hextor, who revere him as an embodiment of villainy and discord, particularly in North Kingdom and other exceedingly decadent portions of the former Great Kingdom. St. Kargoth

takes as a personal symbol a glowing green skull. He is often the favored patron of blackguards, anti-paladins, and other traitors. Other death knights recognize him as the anterior of their lineage, but many despise him for linking their fate inexorably to his own. They obey him only when commanded, though such occasions have grown exceedingly rare over the centuries.

## Lord Monduiz Dephaar, CR 21

### Male Human Death Knight, 18th-Level Fighter

|               |                 |      |                      |
|---------------|-----------------|------|----------------------|
| Strength      | 28              | (+9) | Fort. Save +13       |
| Dexterity     | 13              | (+1) | Ref. Save +11        |
| Constitution  | —               | (+0) | Will Save +13        |
| Intelligence  | 15              | (+2) | Alignment CE         |
| Wisdom        | 16              | (+3) | Speed 20 ft.         |
| Charisma      | 18              | (+4) | Size M (6 ft. 3 in.) |
| Hit Points    | 117             |      | Armor Class 32       |
| Melee Attack  | +27/+22/+17/+12 |      | Flat-Footed AC 31    |
| Ranged Attack | +19/+14/+9/+4   |      | Touch AC 13          |

### Most Common Attacks

+3 keen greataxe, bane vs. humanoids (humans)

+38/+33/+28/+22, 1d12+18+1 Con (18-20 x3)

+3 keen greataxe, bane vs. humanoids (humans) vs. humans +40/+35/+30/+25, 1d12+20+2d6+1 Con (18-20 x3)

**Skills:** Climb +23, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +14, Intimidate +16, Jump +21, Ride +24.

**Feats:** Dodge, Expertise, Improved Critical (greataxe), Improved Disarm, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-by Attack, Run, Spirited Charge, Spring Attack, Sunder, Trample, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe), Whirlwind Attack.

**Possessions:** +3 keen greataxe, bane vs. humanoids (humans); +2 full-plate; +2 animated large steel shield; +2 half-plate barding; belt of giant strength +4; ring of protection +2; cloak of resistance +2.

**Special Attacks:** Special damage—melee attacks cause 1 point of Constitution damage (Will save, DC 22 negates), melee touch attacks cause 1d8+5 points of damage +1 point of Constitution damage (Will save, DC 22 for half damage, negates Constitution damage); *abyssal blast* 1/day—1,120-ft. range, 20-ft.-radius spread, 18d6 fireball, damage is half-fire and half-divine, (Reflex save, DC 22 for half damage); fear aura—creatures of less than 5 HD within 15-ft. radius affected by *fear* as though cast by 18th-level sorcerer (Will save, DC 22 negates).

**Special Qualities:** Undead, undead followers (6 wights mounted on skeletal horses), DR 15/+1, Immunities (cold, electricity, fire, polymorph), SR 28, summon mount (Lord Monduiz Dephaar rides a behir into battle. He armors it with +2 half-plate barding, granting it an Armor Class of 25 and reducing its speed to 30 ft.), turn immunity (cannot be turned, *holy word* can dispel).

Monduiz Dephaar, the Terror of the Fruztii, was in life a Torquann nobleman and Kargoth's chief lieutenant. His unparalleled infamy continues in undeath. Like all death knights, his features are skeletal and burnt, but he sports a shock of brittle scorched hair which he binds after the fash-





ion of some of the northern barbarians. He rarely dons a helm, preferring to strike fear in his enemies by openly displaying his ghastly visage. His eyes glow fiercely and wide at the opportunity of melee. He has centuries of experience in warfare and his instincts on the battlefield are nonpareil, but he is given to blood-rages which cannot be sated until all his enemies are utterly destroyed. He is infamous for taking totems from foes defeated in single combat, most particularly their severed heads. The grisly visages of dozens of former Knight Protectors line the walls of his sanctuary. Lord Dephaar prefers the great axe to all weapons, having wrested the infamous *Lyrngode* from a champion from Djekul centuries ago. The magnificent weapon is seldom outside his reach.

Monduiz Dephaar was born in the North Province at Bellport in 167 CY. His family was one of many which fell victim to the seasonal raids of the Fruztii on the Solnor Coast following the wresting of the Bone March and Ratik by the Aerdi as buffer states against these savage marauders a few decades earlier. Lord Dephaar survived to earn himself membership in the order of the Knight Protectors, which formed the primary vanguard against these raids. He fought beside such luminaries as Sir Forran Vir and Lord Kargoth. Dephaar soon became a veteran of these northern campaigns, a great and relentless warrior feared by the hardy Thillonrian invaders. As his victories against the Fruztii piled up, his reported atrocities were initially overlooked. Eventually, they could not be ignored and he was censured by the highest echelons of the Knight Protectors for violating their time-honored codes. Lord Dephaar went into self-imposed exile to the far north, vowing requital. He lived for a time among the Schnai, where he not only continued his campaign against the Fruztii but was also forced to learn the ways of the barbarians. He returned south to Castle Fharlanst in 203 CY, when word spread around the kingdom that Lord Kargoth had decided to challenge the Council Gallant of the knighthood. Only then was the true horror of the traitorous paladin's plan visited upon Lord Dephaar, who had willingly joined his seditious circle. He has been a death knight ever since.

Though he served Kargoth for a time, Dephaar concentrates on his own affairs. Flushed with his new powers, Lord Monduiz spent years hunting after his enemies, both among the Knight Protectors and the Fruztii, like the quarry he once tormented in the Timberway. The foundering of the knighthood during the reign of Ivid I brought the monster back to the Bone March, where he established a stronghold somewhere in the eastern Blemu Hills. Following the collapse of the Bone March in 563 CY, Lord Dephaar carved out a small realm for himself surrounding his stronghold. He now rules over a mass of humanoids and bandits, who refer to him as the Dreadlord of the Hills. From this northern fastness, Dephaar commands an army of undead servants, still bent on hunting down and killing all the remaining Knight Protectors of the Great Kingdom that he can get his hands on. The order considers him an equally mortal adversary, but the death knight has been given great resources by the fiend Demogorgon, with whose cult he maintains close ties. Both Prince Grenell of North Kingdom and the humanoid chieftains of Spinecastle are well aware of his presence, but grant him a wide berth.





## Lady Lorana Kath of Naelax, CR 19

Female Human Death Knight, 16th-Level Cleric of Hextor

|               |            |      |                      |
|---------------|------------|------|----------------------|
| Strength      | 16         | (+3) | Fort. Save +15       |
| Dexterity     | 14         | (+2) | Ref. Save +12        |
| Constitution  | —          | (+0) | Will Save +20        |
| Intelligence  | 14         | (+2) | Alignment NE         |
| Wisdom        | 20         | (+5) | Speed 20 ft.         |
| Charisma      | 20         | (+5) | Size M (5 ft. 7 in.) |
| Hit Points    | 104        |      | Armor Class 27       |
| Melee Attack  | +15/+10/+5 |      | Flat-Footed AC 25    |
| Ranged Attack | +14/+9/+4  |      | Touch AC 12          |

### Most Common Attacks

+3 *light flail* (two handed) +18/+13/+8, 1d8+7+1 Con  
*Inflict critical wounds* (touch attack) +18, 4d8+16+1 Con

**Skills:** Concentration +19, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +18, Knowledge (religion) +18, Scry +18, Spellcraft +18, Ride +8.

**Feats:** Extra Turning, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Spell Focus (Necromancy).

**Possessions:** +3 *light flail*, +5 *breastplate*, *belt of giant strength* +4; *cloak of resistance* +5 *necklace of fireballs* (Type VII).

**Cleric Spells** (6/7/6/6/5/5/3/3/2; base DC = 15 + spell level): 0-level—*detect magic* x4, *guidance*, *resistance*; 1st—*bane*, *deathwatch*, *detect good*, *entropic shield*, *protection from good*\*, *random action* x2, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bull's strength*, *darkness*, *desecrate*\*, *hold person* x3, *inflict moderate wounds* x2; 3rd—*animate dead* x3, *contagion*, *magic circle against good*\*, *silence* x2; 4th—*air walk*, *freedom of movement*, *poison* x2, *restoration*, *unholy blight*\*; 5th—*circle of doom*, *circle of doom*\*, *ethereal jaunt*, *slay living* x3; 6th—*antilife shell*, *blade barrier*, *create undead*, *harm*\*; 7th—*blasphemy* x2, *destruction*, *disintegrate*\*; 8th—*antimagic field*, *create greater undead*, *earthquake*\*.

\*Domain Spells. Domains: Destruction (+4 to hit, +16 to damage 1/day), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

**Special Attacks:** Special damage—melee attacks cause 1 point of Constitution damage (Will save, DC 23 negates), melee touch attacks cause 1d8+5 points of damage +1 point of Constitution damage (Will save, DC 23 for half damage, negates Constitution damage); *abyssal blast* 1/day—1,040-ft. range, 20-ft.-radius spread, 16d6 fireball, damage is half-fire and half-divine, (Reflex save, DC 23 for half damage); fear aura—creatures of less than 5 HD within 15-ft. radius affected by *fear* as though cast by 16th-level sorcerer (Will save, DC 23 negates); rebuke undead 12/day.

**Special Qualities:** Undead, undead followers (8 ghosts), DR 15/+1, Immunities (cold, electricity, fire, polymorph), SR 26, summon mount (Lady Lorana Kath rides a nightmare into battle.), turn immunity (cannot be turned, *holy word* can dispel).

The only distaff member of Kargoth's infernal company is possibly its cruelest and most debauched personage. Lady Kath was a vile schemer who whispered veiled treason to Lord Kargoth for years and encouraged his descent into darkness. In life, Lady Kath was a priestess of Hextor and in undeath remains one still, though she is now an unwilling pawn of the demon prince Demogorgon, who holds the



# Living Greyhawk Journal

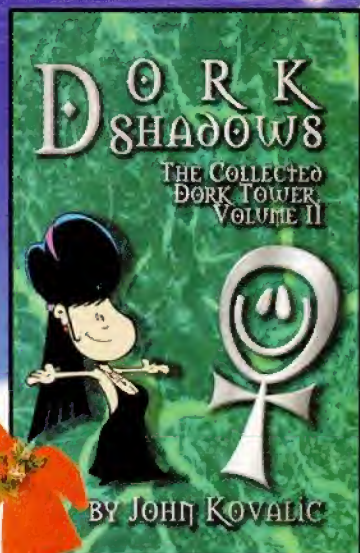
promise of the expiation of her suffering. Lorana remains obsessed with her lost beauty and often wears flesh faces (death masks) culled from horrified maidens that only serve to make her look more ghastly. She wears the armor of a typical death knight, often augmented by what appears to be a bridal veil, at other times the blood-stained leather apron of a butcher. Lorana is a fierce combatant, but prefers to torture weaker foes. She is fond of poisons and cursing magic and she rarely allows people to get near enough to strike at her directly.

The curse of undeath was never her desire, only temporal power, which as a member of House Naelax she deeply craved. As a woman in the late 2nd century CY, however, power could come only through marriage. She earned her rare knighthood through her prodigious skill at arms, but won the respect of her compatriots as a steely-minded battlefield surgeon during the Red Gnoll Clashes of the late 180s CY. In 196 CY, Lorana was promised to Prince Movanich of House Atirr, heir to the Herzogy of the North Province, in an effort by the Overking to heal the rift between the two then warring houses. But Movanich would not have her and spurned the marriage. Lady Kath was humiliated. She joined Kargoth's mutinous retinue, indeed was one of its instigators, but suffered the same fate as all the others when the paladin unleashed a demonic horror on the Great Kingdom in 203 CY. The newly sired lady death knight returned to North Province following the upheaval. Herzog Movanich died mysteriously in 223 CY and House Naelax once again ruled in Eastfair, while the Atirr were nearly persecuted out of exis-

tence over the next two centuries. Lady Kath was accepted back into her house and granted a manor and estate, far from the centers of power in the North Kingdom.

Lady Kath's home is two days northeast of Stringen, where she has ruled over a cowed peasantry for untold decades. She has personally conducted many lifetimes of research and experimentation, digging up long-buried secrets of the ancient Ur-Flan necromancers who once inhabited those lands before the arrival of the Aerdi. She uses the local natives as cattle, culling the herd for her gruesome investigations. Her efforts resulted in the creation of the animus (see *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* #2) for the priesthood of Hextor, presented to Ivid V as a gift before the onset of the Greyhawk Wars a decade ago. Some say this creation was a mad bid by the death knight to create a mate that could abide her nature or the byproduct of experiments into reversing her own curse. Now, with the fall of Rauxes, Lady Kath's stronghold may be the last place in the Great Kingdom that new animuses might still be created, making it a place of great importance to the priesthood of Hextor. She is served there by animuses and morbid priests of Hextor who obey her every desire in order to avoid her frequent rages. Among Lady Kath's few willing guests is the Hextorian cleric Verminek of Eastfair, who is nearly as vile as she, but fawns upon her in a mockery of courtly manners. Prince Grenell avoids her frequent summons as though they were sent by the Reaper himself, but often sends servitors who have fallen out of favor with the court at Eastfair in his place.

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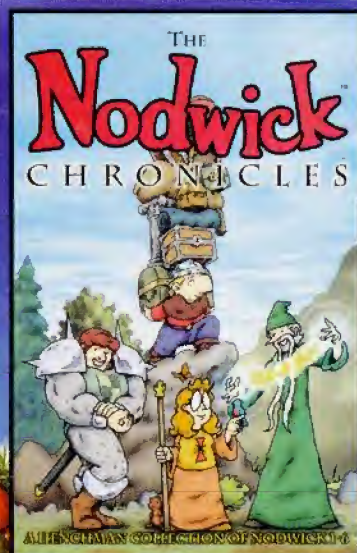


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## Prince Myrhal of Rax, CR 18

Male Human Death Knight, 15th-Level Fighter

|               |             |      |                      |
|---------------|-------------|------|----------------------|
| Strength      | 22          | (+6) | Fort. Save+11        |
| Dexterity     | 18          | (+4) | Ref. Save+11         |
| Constitution  | —           | (+0) | Will Save+9          |
| Intelligence  | 10          | (+0) | AlignmentCE          |
| Wisdom        | 14          | (+2) | Speed 20 ft.         |
| Charisma      | 10          | (+0) | Size M (5 ft. 9 in.) |
| Hit Points    | 97          |      | Armor Class 29       |
| Melee Attack  | +21/+16/+11 |      | Flat-Footed AC 26    |
| Ranged Attack | +19/+14/+9  |      | Touch AC 13          |

### Most Common Attacks

*Oozing trident of Azharadian* (melee) +25/+20/+15, 1d8+11+1d6+1 Con (19-20 x2)

*Oozing trident of Azharadian* (thrown) +23/+18/+13, 1d8+11+1d6+1 Con (19-20 x2)

Skills: Climb +11r, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +10, Ride +9.

Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Far Shot, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (trident), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (trident), Weapon Specialization (trident).

Possessions: *Oozing trident of Azharadian*, +2 breastplate, +2 large steel shield, belt of giant strength +4, Myrhal's Crown.

Special Attacks: Special damage—melee attacks cause 1 point of Constitution damage (Will save, DC 17 negates), melee touch attacks cause 1d8+5 points of damage +1 point of Constitution damage (Will save, DC 17 for half damage, negates Constitution damage); *abyssal blast* 1/day—600-ft. range, 20-ft.-radius spread, 15d6 fireball, damage is half-fire and half-divine, (Reflex save, DC 17 for half damage); fear aura—creatures of less than 5 HD within 15-ft. radius affected by *fear* as though cast by 15th-level sorcerer (Will save, DC 17 negates).

Special Qualities: Undead, undead followers (7 ghast courtiers), DR 15/+1, Immunities (cold, electricity, fire, polymorph), SR 25, summon mount (Prince Myrhal rides a wyvern into battle.), turn immunity (cannot be turned, *holy word* can dispel).

### Myrhal's Crown (minor artifact)

Prince Myrhal believes his prized crown to be a third of the famed *regalia of might* dedicated to the ethos of evil (the other components being an orb and scepter). He won the crown in a battle with the lich Hathamriz the Dissaffected on an island in the Solnor Ocean a century ago, and views that event as the moment at which the Lords of Evil sponsored him as their immortal champion.

Whether or not the crown is in fact the genuine article, few can refute that it grants its wearer extraordinary powers. Upon command, the crown can render its wearer invisible, per the *invisibility* spell. The wearer may *detect thoughts* at all times (as the spell of the same name). Additionally, the crown enables its wearer to act as though hasted for up to 10 rounds each day. The duration of the *haste* need not be consecutive rounds.

The crown bestows one negative level on any nonevil creature attempting to wear it. The negative level remains as long as the crown is worn, and disappears when the crown is



removed. This negative level never results in actual level loss, but it cannot be overcome in any way (including restoration spells) while the crown is worn.

Assuming *Myrhal's crown* is in fact a part of the *regalia of might*, it will grant its user further powers when worn in conjunction with its counterparts.

*Caster Level: 18th; Weight: 3 lb.*

## Oozing Trident of Azharadian

In the days when the great general Azharadian led Aerdy warbands to victory, this graceful weapon served as a symbol of his power. Now, after centuries in the hands of the death knight Prince Myrhal, it has become corrupted and pitted with corrosive acid.

Upon uttering a command word, the bearer of the weapon may cast *command* (as the cleric spell, Will save DC 13) up to three times per day.

The trident bears a +3 enhancement bonus, and deals +1d6 bonus points of acid damage on a successful hit. Additionally, twice per day it may be commanded to spout a gout of corrosive acid 5 ft. wide by 150 ft. long, starting from the tip of the trident's tines. Anyone caught within the area of the gout suffers 5d6 points of acid damage. Those making a successful Reflex save (DC 15) suffer only half damage.

*Caster Level: 10th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, command, Melf's acid arrow; Market Price: 48,200; Weight: 5 lb.*

Prince Myrhal of Rax is thought to be the only death knight of high noble birth. In 203 CY, when the paladin Kargoth turned traitor, he had no greater proponent than Prince Myrhal of Dustbridge, a cousin of the reigning Overking Jiranen and a schemer who desired the Malachite Throne for himself. He willingly threw his lot in with the traitorous Lord Kargoth, but failed to foresee the consequences of his actions. Though this miscalculation initially proved costly, the prince now revels in his preternatural power, which has given him unending life and the time to construct plots of exceeding intricacy and maliciousness. Prince Myrhal wears the darkened armor and flowing cape typical of a death knight, but in the place of a helm has donned an imperious diadem, rumored to be an ancient *crown of might*. He also wields a great trident once held by the heralded Aerdi general, Azharadian, which has the power to compel men to obey his commands.

Prince Myrhal still sees himself as the rightful heir to the Aerdy throne and has plotted for the entire length of his undead existence to gain it for himself. He is not mad, but certainly evinces strong megalomania. He has taken as a personal symbol the Aerdi Sol ringed with teeth. The death knight abandoned his personal demesne soon after his transformation and established a hidden enclave in the vast Adri forest. Over the centuries, he has paid close attention to the politics of the celestial houses of the Great Kingdom through the aid of spies and scrying spells. He has subtly tried to manipulate events in his favor. Prince Myrhal had his own relatives (descendents within the House of Rax) assassinated in a mad bargain with Prince Ivid I of the North in the 430s CY, but the Naelaxian prince double-crossed him, taking the throne for himself and earning his house Myrhal's undying hatred. Dustbridge, once an ancestral holding of his family, was given over to Naelax princelings and the once-prodigious

forests around the castle were cleared. The death knight has watched with derision as successive Naelaxian Overkings have diminished the Great Kingdom into a shadow of its former self, culminating with the recent conflagration of Rauxes at the hands of Ivid V. Prince Myrhal believes that his time is finally nigh and that little will stop him from claiming his birthright.

Myrhal is believed to have a stronghold in some of the deepest parts of the Adri forest, some 45 miles southeast of the Coldwood. From there he awaits his opportunity in a debauched mockery of the old court at Rauxes, complete with retainers (many undead) and a throne room. His long-time seneschal is an old vampire named Lurgenz, a dissident Darmen princeling whom the death knight has dispatched to the ruins of Rauxes to learn the fate of Ivid the Undying. Prince Myrhal's attention has not only extended outside the vast wood, but to its environs as well. He has conducted decades of research on the lost lore and magic of the elves, particularly focusing on the lost city in the Coldwood. He constantly sends raids to test the defenses of the Sentinels who protect that place. Only Parren Ludern, a surviving Knight Protector and Ranger Lord based at Elversford in the Adri forest, has marshaled any significant human opposition to the death knight. All the denizens of the wood fear what would happen should he gain access to the secrets buried there.

## More Death Knights

*Kargoth, Dephaar, Kath, and Myrhal are the most powerful and influential of Berth's death knights, but a number of other one-time candidates of Lord Kargoth continue to roam the Flanaess.*

## Sir Maeril of Naelax

*Ftr12/Rog4 (Chaotic Evil)*

Only two of the original death knights remained companions throughout their lives—the brothers Sir Maeril and Sir Farian of Lirham. Centuries later, only Maeril survives, though the memory of his brother haunts him still. They were former Naelaxian nobleman whose family lost most of their possessions during the ascension of House Atirr to the Herzogry of the North Province in 134 CY. They overcame their meager circumstances to earn worthy places among the ranks of the Knight Protectors, ultimately siding with the ill-fated Lord Kargoth. Their inherited slight was never forgotten and in 209 CY, possessed of their new infernal powers, they attempted to lead an undead army on the city of Delaric. The invasion was foiled by the fortuitous arrival of St. Benedor and a squadron of Knight Protectors, who had been chasing word of Lord Kargoth in Dustbridge only days before. Benedor unleashed the Orb of Sol and the artifact destroyed Lord Farian, immolating the death knight in curtains of strange white flame. Maeril claimed the still burning skull of his brother and rode off with it, vowing infernal vengeance on his former comrades.

It would be years before he would get an opportunity to make good on his claim. Members of House of Naelax were



known to have dealings with fiends, and the discovery of the Cauldron of Night during this time provided Lord Maeril the opportunity he had long sought. He and certain diabolical priests of Hextor made the arduous journey to the isle to forge a weapon that incorporated his brother's skull with the magical substrates there. The product of their efforts was *Astrosus*, the infamous deathblade which could communicate with its wielder, retaining the memories of Farian of Lirtham. It was instantly a weapon of great evil with an insatiable bloodlust. Lord Maeril carried it proudly and wrought great destruction with the weapon over the ensuing years, but lost the blade in battle with St. Ceril the Relentless in 392 CY and has never recovered it, though he wanders the Flanaess still, seeking its return.

## Lord Andromansis of Garasteth

Wiz15/Ftr5 (Neutral Evil)

Lord Adromansis was a haughty young nobleman from the southeastern coast who became embroiled in Kargoth's plot at the eleventh hour. Persuaded by this last minute bid to get a taste of the secrets of the great Schandor's magic, he acceded to the raid on the Temple of Lothan. But Kargoth deceived him like all the others and he was transformed into a hideous death knight. Adromansis despises his condition and has turned to magecraft to research a cure to the curse which binds him to his undead shell. He has stripped himself of his infernal armor and wears only a cowl. He spurned Demogorgon by striking a bargain with the demon prince's great rival, Orcus, quickly becoming obsessed with the intersection of magic and undeath.

He has a tower, located somewhere in the vaunted and bustling Old City of Rel Astra, from which he is seldom thought to venture forth. Only Lord Drax, who shares distant kinship with the death knight, visits him with any regularity. The Lord Mayor seeks a cure to his own undead condition, and the death knight has agreed to treat him. Adromansis is attended by many forms of intelligent undead in his home. They serve as his spies and procurers of the unspeakable ingredients required for his experiments.

## Sir Oslan Knarren

Pal5/Blk8 (Lawful Evil)

Oslan of Oldridge was a great paladin of Pholtus and an acclaimed Knight Protector who was duped by Lord Kargoth into being an accomplice to his fell plan. A Cranden nobleman, distantly related to St. Benedor and an ancestor of the mage Bigby, he has suffered greatly due to his horrific state. Pholtus no longer hears his entreaties and the death knight continuously tries to redeem himself. Oslan's nature constantly betrays him, however, and his efforts to perform chivalrously often go horribly wrong. His greatest desire is to see St. Kargoth die at his hands, but Demogorgon urges him onward, allowing him no peace or rest. Sir Knarren wanders the wildernesses of the central Flanaess, avoiding most contact with humanity, seeking a honorable death which never comes to him. The death knight's only companion is an undead horse named, *Corrigor*, which is fiercely loyal to its master.

## Sir Rezinar of Haxx

Ftr12 (Chaotic Evil)

Rezinar of Haxx was a naïve young knight from Idee who unwittingly became wrapped up in the plots of his compatriots.

Becoming a death knight has driven him progressively mad and he suffers from many delusions, most particularly that he is being hunted down by mages of the Overking. He murdered a powerful South Province wizard, Allreynen the Gripper, who attempted to destroy him only months after he was cursed. He lost a hand in the conflict, which has never been restored. The order of wizards known as the Eldritch Lords attempted to hunt him down, but they were unsuccessful and the death knight was driven beyond the borders of Aerdy. Sir Rezinar continues to despise all mages. Though he escaped the Great Kingdom many years ago, he is obsessed with his homeland and wanders the rest of the Flanaess still believing the empire is intact. He hopes one day to return to it in glory at the head of great army that will purge the land of wizards and magi. Sir Rezinar was last seen in the Sheldomar Valley, where rumors say he was trying to raise an army in the Lost Lands.

## Lord Thyrian of Naelax

Ftr14 (Lawful Evil)

A dastardly figure and an uncle of the vampire Maskaleyne (who currently serves the dark lord of Dorakaa as a member of the Boneheart), Lord Thyrian thirsts for additional power and a realm of his own, but thus far has bided his time. Centuries of infernal service to Demogorgon have marked his undead life, but his diligence and ruthlessness have won him great freedoms. His hatred of St. Kargoth was waned over the years and Lord Thyrian has since turned himself into a hired sword, a mercenary to many evil tyrants, including most recently Duke Szeffrin of Almor. He is currently thought to be under the employ of luz, working as a roving enforcer of the evil god's will. He is paid in the only currency which matters to him now, the powerful sorcery he requires to destroy the Orb of Sol and with it, hopefully end his curse.

## The Remains

Four additional death knights stalk the Flanaess, though their histories and whereabouts are little known. Many assume that their avoidance of the public eye must mean they are dead, but all have been seen within the last century, and divinations engaged by the Eldritch Lords reveal that they still scheme from locations unknown. The mysterious four tend to work alone, and have little contact with each other. They are as follows:

Sir Minar Syrric of Darmen: Brd12/Ftr3 (LE)

Duke Urkar Grasz of Torquann: Clr11-Hextor/Ftr4 (LE)

Sir Luren the Boar of Torquann: Ftr18 (CE)

Lord Khayven of Rax: Pal7/Blk10 (CE)

Those attempting to apprehend or destroy a death knight are encouraged to contact a representative from the Knight Protectors of the Great Kingdom before setting out. ✨

Author Gary Holian co-wrote the *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer* and maintains the *WORLD OF GREYHAWK* fansite: Canonfire! ([www.canonfire.com](http://www.canonfire.com)). He sends thanks to Scott Bennie, author of *"Saintly Standards"* (*DRAGON*, 1983), who inspired this work. Thanks to Darrin Drader, who contributed ideas to the death knight template last issue.



by Chris Pramas

# People's State of MORDENGARD

**D**warves didn't arrive in Western Oerik in significant numbers until 50 years after the Demon War. Then, clans of dwarves came from the south, traveling up the coastline on war barges. Four waves of warriors and settlers made their way into the Sundered Empire region over the course of a hundred years, looking for a new land to call home. Unlike the human tribes, who were forced west by hostile elven armies, the only thing the dwarven clans were escaping was overpopulation.

## MORDENGARD ESTABLISHED

The dwarves settled in a range of mountains west of the elven city-states, and in 196, the clans decided to join together to create a true nation. The clan leaders wanted to set up a traditional dwarven kingdom, but there was no royal family. To solve this dilemma, a council of important military, clerical, and social leaders was created, and it spent ten years deliberating. Finally, the council decided that it would elect a king from among the clan leaders, with the losing clan leaders being allowed to found noble houses, so that a proper dwarven kingdom could be established.

In 206, the Blessed Kingdom of Mordengard was born, under the leadership of King Smoni. The first king proved a popular ruler. He sponsored a program of building and expansion that linked the many dwarven holds together and created a central metropolis. By the time King Smoni passed on, Mordengard was stable and prosperous. Power then passed to Smoni's son, and the noble houses supported the kingship. The

dwarves, it seemed, had created exactly the nation they'd wanted.

## THE WAR OF SPITE

Mordengard stayed on the sidelines during the establishment of Ravilla. The elven commanders were happy to leave the dwarves alone, since they didn't practice sorcery and didn't oppose elven expansion. The dwarves were happy to profit from Ravilla, selling weapons and armor to the ever-expanding elven legions. The money was so good that Mordengard closed its borders to refugees so it would not anger the Oligarchs, a slight still remembered in Thalos to this day.

It wasn't until 759 that the dwarves got a taste of elven steel. In that year, a dwarf expedition was exploring the mountains east of Ravilla. They encountered a mighty warrior, later identified as the god Stratis, who promised them untold fame if they would follow him. Stratis led them toward one of the ancient gray elf cities, hidden since the Demon War and protected as a final refuge for the elven people. Gray elf guards, alarmed by the dwarves' presence, attacked the expedition and killed all but one of its members.

When the surviving dwarf returned to Mordengard, war was all but assured. The elves couldn't explain that they were protecting secret cities, and the dwarves couldn't allow the insult to go unpunished. Thus began the War of Spite, a vicious and ultimately pointless conflict that lasted twenty-one years. The war finally ended in a draw, with the armies battering each other into exhaustion.

## THE TYRANT KING

After the War of Spite, the king concentrated on rebuilding Mordengard. He didn't realize that the greatest threat to Mordengard would come from within his very household. Hakon, the king's third son, had realized that it was unlikely he would ever become king. This did not please him, so he arranged the murders of his two older brothers and then sped along the death of his father with a debilitating poison. By the time his father passed on, Hakon had the reigns of power firmly in hand. He was crowned king and began a long reign of abuse and exploitation.

Hakon viewed dwarven workers as his property, and he drove them ruthlessly. He ordered gigantic construction projects, culminating with the King's Spire, a monstrous tower that jutted out of the mountainside. Known as the Tyrant's Peak to the workers, this became Hakon's center of power and was guarded by his most loyal troops.

Hakon ruled for exactly one-hundred years. As the rights of the workers and then the soldiers faded away, it became clear that all the dwarves of Mordengard were nothing but slaves to Hakon. Finally, the people rose up in rebellion. The workers picked up their hammers and defied the Tyrant King. Most of the army, long underpaid and abusively disciplined, joined them. Only the tyrant's personal guard remained loyal, and they defended the King's Spire fanatically. After a number of costly assaults, the rebels retreated. Hakon rejoiced, sure he had crushed their spirit. Unknown to him, however, engineers were hard at work



underneath the Spire. The next morning Hakon woke up to the sound of explosions. Tyrant's Peak was rocked at its very foundations and came crashing down, killing Hakon and every one of his loyalists.

## A NEW NATION

The triumphant rebels set about rebuilding their shattered land. With the King, all his relatives, and most of the nobility dead, it was decided that the very idea of kingship should remain entombed under the ruins of the Tyrant's Peak. The rebels decided to organize a new government that would recognize the real cornerstone of the nation: the workers. The workers and soldiers organized themselves into guilds and elected a Workers' Council to run

the government. As precedent, they pointed back to the original council that had elected the first king. It was time, they decided, for the dwarven people to control their own fate. Thus was born the People's State of Mordengard.

To safeguard their revolution, the dwarves established the People's Legion, a standing army of rigid professionalism. Most citizens serve in the People's Legion at some point in their lives, so Mordengard has a deep reserve of trained warriors. Since the start of the Godwar, the ranks of the People's Legion have grown greatly. They are ready to give their lives so that Mordengard can remain free.

## STONE SPIKE

Medium-Size Elemental, (Earth)

Hir Dice: 3d8+12 (25 hp)

Initiative: -1 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 18 (-1 Dex, +9 natural)

Attacks: 2 slams +6 melee

Damage: Slam 1d8+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Elemental

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +0, Will +1

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 8, Con 18, Int 4,

Wis 11, Cha 11

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +3

Feats: Power Attack

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary or gang (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually neutral

Advancement: 4-6 HD (Medium-size),

7-9 HD (Large)



*The dwarves have made alliances with many creatures from the Elemental Plane of Earth. One of these allies is the stone spike, a brutish cousin of the earth elemental. The stone spike is famed for its smashing power and toughness.*

# WIZARDS WORKSHOP

## CHAINMAIL 100

*Learn the history of the People's State of Mordengard.*

## COMMAND POINTS 102

*They're big, bad, and coming to your warband soon!*

## SAGE ADVICE 104

*The Sage takes a vacation... in hell.*

## DM'S TOOLBOX 110

*Bluffing—it isn't just for PCs anymore.*

## SILICON SORCERY 112

*Build castles worth keeping. Stronghold shows you how.*

## Combat

The dwarves use the stone spike like a battering ram, crushing centers of enemy resistance. The creatures are not very smart, so unless commanded to do otherwise, they simply rush forward and attack the nearest enemy.

**Elemental:** Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. Not subject to critical hits or flanking.



# COMMAND POINTS

by Rob Heinsoo

## BIG 'UNS of the UNDERGROUND

*It's time for a little DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CHAINMAIL pop quiz! (Choose all that apply.)*

### BLOOD AND DARKNESS IS . . .

- A) the first D&D CHAINMAIL supplement.
- B) a stunning new designer fragrance from Sarah Michelle-Gellar.
- C) dedicated to the tenet that if slaying enemies above ground is good, being locked with those enemies in close-quarter combat underground is even better.
- D) the CHAINMAIL design team's opportunity to introduce a bevy of new models who are all big, nasty, and very deadly.

If you chose answer B, you can either rush out to the stores to purchase the scent that's stronger than garlic or cheat and retake the quiz. If you chose answers A, C, and D, read on for exciting information on the large monsters and badass warriors releasing soon, who will change the way you build your CHAINMAIL warbands.

### AHMUT'S LEGION

**Who:** Crazy Minotaur Cultist

**What:** All converts to the dark ways of Nerull and the ranks of Ahmut's legions are welcome, but some converts are more equal than others. The Crazy Minotaur

Cultist hits for 4 points of damage. When making a charge attack, the Crazy Minotaur Cultist inflicts 5 points of damage. Once locked in melee, it has an extra melee attack, which also inflicts 4 damage!

**How:** The Crazy Minotaur Cultist's abilities—Reach 1 in., Scary 1, and Extra Melee Attack—help it from being overwhelmed by smaller models. Against foes equally as tough, the Crazy Minotaur wants to be the “charger” instead of the “charged.” A thin screen of smaller models can help protect the Minotaur until it is ready to charge, without getting in its way.

**The Downside:** The Crazy Minotaur Cultist is crazy, so it only makes sense that it is difficult to control. It has the Difficult Troop x3 ability, making it the least tractable troop in the game. Ahmut Legion's junior commander, the Half-Orc



Fighter, has only 2 command points, so it can't do much with the Minotaur. Instead, try the Human Death Cleric, who is one of the best commanders in the game.

**When:** The Crazy Minotaur Cultist is expected to release in January.

### DRAZEN'S HORDE

**Who:** Ogre Delver

**What:** If you were a kick-ass ogre and you gained a level of ranger, would you use two battle axes one-handed with your two-weapon fighting skills and declare humans as your favored enemy? Of course you would. And if you were the Ogre Delver, you'd carry around a big hammer

to throw at people you didn't like. You'd also wear enough armor to give you an advantage over non-armored idiots like the Crazy Minotaur Cultist. The Ogre Delver's superior weapon skills give it nearly the best melee attack score in the game (9) and an Extra Melee Attack.

**How:** Simply put, the Ogre Delver rocks. Back this model up with some Orc Troopers from the base set or some Bugbear Troopers (releasing in January) and use your warband's command points to maneuver the Delver where it will do the most damage. You could also team up the Ogre Delver with some Goblin Scouts to ensure that you win the scouting roll, because the Ogre Delver also has the Scout +4 ability.

**The Downside:** Um . . . the Ogre Delver rocks! Its Difficult x2 ability is not really a disadvantage for its power level. The Delver's biggest weakness is probably its vulnerability to *cause fear* spells, since its save of 4 is simply okay rather than great. Note that the Delver is only one level shy of immunity to *cause fear*. Just wait until May when the first CHAINMAIL campaign book comes out and you can level up your Ogre Delver during campaign play!

**When:** The Ogre Delver is expected to release in February.





## MORDENGARD

**Who:** Stonechild

**What:** Compared to the Crazy Minotaur Cultist and the Ogre Delver, the Stonechild seems small. In actuality, the Stonechild towers over the dwarves of Mordengard. The



Stonechild is of mixed heritage—part human, part earth elemental. His armor is nearly as good as the Dwarf Fighter's armor (from the base set), but the Stonechild's melee attack is better—when he hits in melee, he inflicts 3 points of damage. He can pick up stones from the battlefield, charge them with his own magical energy, and throw them 6 inches to inflict 1 point of damage (2 points of damage against undead). If Mordengard's armies are fighting inside magical *darkness* fields created by opposing models (such as the Tiedling Fighter, which releases in January), the Stonechild's Blindfight ability makes him the natural leader.

**How:** The Stonechild offers more flexibility than most Mordengard troops. He can go toe-to-toe with anyone or stand back and pelt the enemy with thrown weapons. The Stonechild is also faster than most dwarves, with a speed of 4. If you're not careful to keep him under command, however, that speed can be a curse, as he can quickly get too far ahead of the rest of your warband.

**The Downside:** The Stonechild is still just a Medium-sized model and has only 4 health. Remember to keep some command points and an order free to help the Stonechild pass the morale test when he takes his first 2 points of damage.

**When:** The Stonechild is expected to release in March.

## NARESH

**Who:** Howler

**What:** The Howler is a psychotic evil outsider with a melee attack score of 9. It does 3 points of damage and has the Extra Melee Attack ability. To top it all off, the Howler is faster than any other



model in the game, moving 24 inches per turn at top speed! This is particularly useful against unsuspecting spellcasters.

**How:** If you let the Howler charge at top speed, be prepared to follow it quickly with some support. Good commanders, such as the Demonic Gnomel Adept or the soon-to-be-released Tiedling Fighter, might be better advised to hang back with the Howler until there's a perfect opening for the Howler's lightning speed.

**The Downside:** Howlers are Cowardly—if it begins and ends its turn more than 6 inches away from an allied model, it must make a morale save or rout. This poses a problem if you let the Howler run too far ahead and can't send it any support. On the other hand, the Howler's normal save is 7, the highest in the game! Even with its -2 morale penalty, the Howler still has a morale save of 5.

**When:** The Howler is expected to arrive in stores in March.

## THALOS

**Who:** Pulverizer


**What:** The Pulverizer might be just Medium-sized, but it packs a wallop. Its Sonic Shriek ability inflicts damage on all models inside a 6-inch cone and stuns those that fail their save.

**How:** The Pulverizer has the incredibly high armor score of 21, but since it has only 3 health, you'll want to deploy it behind your other models. The Pulverizer is an especially helpful model to use if you're playing against darkness-using warbands, because the Pulverizer has blindsight 8 inches and would rather fight in *darkness* than out of it.

**The Downside:** Like the Hammerer, the Pulverizer only activates half of the time. If the Pulverizer activates every time, your opponent is history. On the other hand, if it activates once during the game, you're in trouble.

**When:** The Pulverizer is expected to release in January.



There's also the Gray Elf Snakestrike Duelist and the Spitting Felldrake (for the forces of Ravilla), and many more cool models releasing soon, but we didn't want to spoil all the surprises! Next month, we'll discuss new strategy tips for your game. 



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This month the Sage considers various planar conundrums, including planar matters in the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting.

I'm unclear about a few things from the *Manual of the Planes*. Assuming I am using the Great Wheel cosmology, exactly where are some spells that access the Ethereal Plane available or unavailable? Can I cast spells that access the Ethereal Plane in the Outer Planes?

### When we're visiting another plane, are we considered outsiders and vulnerable to spells that affect outsiders?

No, you cannot cast ethereal-related spells in the Great Wheel's Outer Planes; see the sidebar on page 55 of the *Manual of the Planes*. You also cannot use those spells in any other locale that doesn't have access to the Ethereal Plane (such as in a cosmology that lacks an Ethereal Plane).

Be aware that the list of ethereal-related spells on page 32 is somewhat misleading. For example: Spells marked with an (F) work anywhere; these are force spells that have some effect on the Ethereal Plane but work fine without Ethereal Plane access. Also, the Divination spells *see invisibility*, *true seeing*, and *zone of revelation* work fine without an ethereal connection; they, too, can affect the Ethereal Plane but don't depend on it.

Finally, the *zone of respite* spell also works without Ethereal Plane access (although it, too, blocks travel to the Ethereal Plane). Likewise, the *dimensional anchor* spell keeps creatures from leaving whatever plane they're currently on and does not depend on Ethereal Plane access.

Can I use spells that access the Astral Plane on the Ethereal Plane?

Yes, see page 46 in *Manual of the Planes*.

Can I cast spells that access the Astral Plane within the Astral Plane, such as *teleport*?

Yes. If you're on a plane, your spells have access to that plane.

Can I open my *bag of holding* on the Ethereal Plane? Can I open it on the Astral Plane? If the answer is yes to both, why does page 33 of the *Manual of the Planes* even have a list extradimensional spells?

The answer is yes to both, at least within the context of the Great Wheel. The *Manual of the Planes* lists extradimensional spells because it's possible to create a cosmology that has a single dimension. In such a cosmology, spells that use extradimensional space will not function.

Will extradimensional items rupture a *bag of holding*? The *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* says that a *bag of holding* placed within a *portable hole* tears a rift to the Astral Plane. Bag and hole alike are then sucked into the void and forever lost. The *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* also says that when a *portable hole* is placed within a *bag of holding*, it opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The hole, the bag, and any creatures within a 10-foot radius are drawn there, destroying the

*portable hole* and *bag of holding* in the process. However, the description for *Heward's handy haversack* makes no mention of any rifts or gates. This implies that only the combination of a *bag of holding* and *portable hole* forms a rift or gate. Thus, a *bag of holding* could be placed inside another *bag of holding* with no unusual effects.

As stated in the FAQ (check out [www.wizards.com/dnd](http://www.wizards.com/dnd) for the latest FAQ), it's a general rule that you can't mix items containing non-dimensional or extradimensional spaces (things that are bigger inside than out) with each other or with *portable holes*. Such combinations tend to strain the fabric of the cosmos. Putting one *bag of holding* within another is just like putting the bag into a *portable hole*. Items that function like *bags of holding*, such as *Heward's handy haversacks*, cause the same mishaps when mishandled.

Note that you can freely go plane hopping with *portable holes*, *bags of holding*, and the like. Spells that produce their own extradimensional spaces, such as *rope trick*, pose no danger to occupants who might be using *portable holes*, *bags of holding*, and the like.

Say a character is forced into the Astral Plane because he placed a *portable hole* into a *bag of holding*. His bag and hole are destroyed. Could he pick up the stuff and just step back through the gate? There is no mention that the gate closes, so I would assume it works just like *gate* spell, which allows

## POWER PLAY

### The Brewmaster by Stephen Schubert

A 1st-level gnome wizard with an 18 Intelligence, 4 ranks of Alchemy, and Skill Focus (Alchemy) has a +12 to Alchemy skill checks (+4 Intelligence, +4 Alchemy, +2 Skill Focus, +2 for gnome). By 6th level, the gnome could have an alchemist's lab and 5 more ranks, for a total of +19 to his skill checks. As his minimum result is 20, he would always succeed when creating alchemist's fire, and he could create a flask of alchemist's fire within 5 days (craft DC 20 multiplied by minimum skill check of 20 = 400 cp per day, or 1/5 the price of alchemist's fire). He could also brew a vial of acid every two days with average skill checks.



# POWER PLAY

## I'm an Archer, Not a Wizard! by Stephen Schubert

A 12th-level elven transmuter with a 22 Dexterity and 18 Strength can become the ultimate archer by casting *cat's grace* on himself and *greater magic weapon* on his mighty composite longbow and again on his arrows. With the Weapon Focus, Point Blank Shot, and Rapid Shot feats, the archer can fire three times per round at a minimum of +21/+21/+16 for 1d8+13 within 30 feet (first shot is +6 base, +7 Dexterity, +1 Weapon Focus, +1 Point Blank Shot, +8 enhancement for bow and arrow, -2 for Rapid Shot). But when he casts *Tenser's transformation* on himself (adds +6 to base attack at 12th level), he can fire four times per round at a minimum of +27/+27/+22/+17 for the same damage.

two-way travel provided someone holds the *gate* open. In this case, how long do you have to pick up all your stuff, and who has to concentrate on holding it open? Also, how far are the contents of the *portable hole* and *bag of holding* likely to scatter?

As mentioned in the FAQ, the gate created in such a circumstance stays open only for an instant, then closes. Anything sucked through the gate is stuck on the Astral Plane and must find another way to leave the plane.

Unattended objects can't move on the Astral Plane (see page 47 of the *Manual of the Planes*), so they're likely to be heaped up right next to the gate, and gathering them up shouldn't be too big a problem, provided that there are no denizens of the Astral Plane on hand to interfere with the process.

Will the *planeshift* spell take you to any plane, or just to the Astral, Ethereal, and Shadow Planes?

Any plane. You will find specific references to the *planeshift* spell in the descriptions of these planes. These were meant to clarify that the spell would work in those transitive planes, not that it would work only on those planes.

Say that I'm using *astral projection* and step through a color pool leading to another plane. When I appear on the new plane, I create a new body, correct? What happens to my equipment? For example, say I've brought along my *ring of protection +1*. While on the Astral Plane, do I have an astral version of the ring? Do I have the ring after I step through the pool? If so, what happens if the ring is destroyed or if I leave it behind on the plane I'm visiting? I can understand the astral version

of the ring, but I am a bit confused as to what happens when I leave the Astral Plane to visit another plane.

You form a new body when you pass through the color pool, and all your "astral equipment" goes with you. Essentially, your astral body and equipment is transformed into a new physical replica of your original form and equipment. Your new body and equipment continues to function, just as it did while you were on the Astral Plane. Your original body and equipment remains behind in the place where you began your *astral projection*.

If the astral version of a piece of equipment is destroyed, you lose the

copy, but the original item is unharmed. If you lose the astral copy and leave it behind, it exists until you exit the plane, then it fades into oblivion.

Monks and members of several prestige classes (such as the divine disciple from the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*) eventually become outsiders if they gain enough class levels. How are these characters affected by spells like *dismissal* and *banishment*?

*Dismissal* and *banishment* affect extraplanar creatures, not outsiders. Those spells affect outsider monks and outsider divine disciples only if the monks or divine disciples aren't on their home plane when they're subjected to the spells. If they're on their home planes, you can't even target them with either spell (see each spell's Target entry); however, see the next question.

Let's say my party goes plane hopping. When we're visiting another plane, are we considered outsiders and vulnerable to *protection from evil*, *banishment*, and other spells that affect outsiders? What if we visit an entirely different cosmology?

## THE UNSPEAKABLE OAF

by John Kovalic





Just for the record, neither of the spells you mentioned has any special effect on outsiders. *Protection from evil* grants AC and saving throw bonuses against assaults from evil creatures, blocks mental control, and prevents bodily contact by conjured or summoned creatures—except good elementals and outsiders. As noted in the previous question, *banishment* affects extraplanar creatures (which might or might not be outsiders).

In any case, traveling the planes doesn't change your creature type, even if you leave your home cosmology and enter a different one. Once you leave your home plane, however, you are extraplanar. A spell such as *dismissal* or *banishment* will send you back to your home plane (or another plane 20% of the time).

The descriptions of the spells *blasphemy*, *holy word*, *word of law*, and *word of chaos* say that if you are on your home plane, casting one of these spells banishes those not of your plane back to their home planes, and creatures native to your plane (with an alignment opposed to the spell) suffer various ill effects. Several evil outsiders have this spell-like ability. How do these spell-like abilities work for an outsider on the Prime Material Plane (which is not its home plane). Conversely, when these outsiders are on their home planes, how are these spells useful? For example, what use is *word of law* to a devil on Baator, where just about everything is lawful evil?

As stated in the FAQ, if the subjects of any of these spells are not extraplanar elementals or outsiders, they suffer effects according to their alignments and Hit Dice. In spite of what the beginning of the third paragraph in each spell's description says, you don't have to be native to the caster's home plane to be affected.

If the spell's subjects are extraplanar elementals or outsiders and the caster is on his home plane, the spell blasts the subjects back to their home planes. These creatures also suffer effects according to their alignments and Hit Dice. Being returned to their home plane is an additional effect, not an alternate effect, as the spells' descriptions imply.

The *Manual of the Planes* contains the spell *seal portal*, which seems to be almost identical to the spell *gate seal* that was presented in *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*. *Seal portal* is only listed as being available to sorcerers and wizards as a 6th-level spell, while *gate seal* is listed as a 6th-level spell for bards, clerics, druids, sorcerers, and wizards. Is this a misprint or am I missing a fundamental difference between the two spells (besides the name)?

You haven't missed anything, and there's no misprint, either. Both spells are fundamentally the same. However, the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* is rife with portals, and spellcasters of all stripes have to be able to deal with them. Because portals are rarer in the Great Wheel cosmology, portal sealing spells are more rare. If you are using both the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* and the *Manual of the Planes*, use the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* description and the *Manual of the Planes* name.

I see in the *Manual of the Planes* that the Great Wheel cosmology has sixteen Outer Planes. Do these in any way mirror the Faerûnian cosmology, other than some obvious parallels such as Baator (The Nine Hells) and the Abyss?

Faerûn has a unique cosmology, although Faerûn's various planes have the traits described in *Manual of the Planes*. For example, Faerûn's Outer Planes are divinely morphic. Furthermore, the cosmology presented in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* assumes that no other cosmologies exist anywhere else. That is, the book assumes that the Great Wheel does not exist at all.

What is the Faerûnian equivalent to the Seven Heavens (Celestia now)? Where are the Green Fields and Warriors Rest in relation to Elysium and Ysgard respectively? Are the Barrens of Doom and Despair a pocket of Hades? I thought that Cyric made his home on Pandemonium, but in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*, Cyric's realm is called the Supreme Throne. Is the Supreme Throne a part of Pandemonium?

As noted in the previous answer, the cosmology of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* is completely different from the standard D&D (Great

Wheel) cosmology. No part of the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology is part of the Great Wheel.

Is there no connection between the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology and the Great Wheel at all?

You can assume the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology is connected to other cosmologies via the Plane of Shadow (as hinted on page 62 of *Manual of the Planes*). That's strictly optional, however; see the next question.

How do I use the *Manual of the Planes* with my FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign? What if I decide to link the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology and the Great Wheel? Can you use the Astral Plane to go anywhere in the two cosmologies? What about the Ethereal and Shadow planes?

In general, you have two options for using the *Manual of the Planes* in a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign. First, you can assume that the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology is the only cosmology that exists, which is the default assumption for FORGOTTEN REALMS campaigns. Or, you can assume that the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology is part of a larger multiverse that contains two or more cosmologies. If you take this option, you should assume that the Plane of Shadow provides the sole link between the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology and other cosmologies. You can, of course, choose other options, but these two involve the least work on your part and allow you to make the fullest use of future FORGOTTEN REALMS game material.

If you choose the first option, you can make use of all the *Manual of the Planes* rules that deal with planar traits and interplanar travel. The transitive planes in the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology work a little differently than what's described in the *Manual of the Planes*, however:

**The Astral Plane:** In the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology, the Astral Plane is a transitive plane, but it is finite, not infinite, and its various branches and tendrils give the cosmology its treelike shape. The diagram on page 157 of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* shows the Astral Plane's branched structure.

The Astral Plane is coterminous (see page 17 in the *Manual of the Planes*) with every other plane in the cosmology,



but because the plane is not infinite, interplanar travel in the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology is possible only along an astral branch. The heavy lines on the diagram show these astral branches. Note that it is not possible to travel from one plane to another without passing through Toril (the Prime Material Plane). Some of the FORGOTTEN REALMS gods have forged minor Astral links, however, between some Outer Planes and demiplanes; these are shown as light lines on the diagram. For example, between Arvandor and Brightwater.

The Astral Plane of the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology offers no connections with other cosmologies, not even to any Astral Planes that might exist in other cosmologies. In all other respects, the Astral plane is identical to the Astral Plane described in the *Manual of the Planes*.

**The Ethereal Plane:** The Ethereal Plane is coexistent with Toril but offers no links or access to any other plane. It is otherwise identical to the Ethereal Plane described in the *Manual of the Planes*. It is also a transitive plane, even though it can't take you anywhere.

**The Shadow Plane:** The Shadow Plane is coexistent with Toril, but it offers no links or access to any other plane. If you decide to run a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign in which other cosmologies exist, the Shadow plane is the link between them. Shar and Mask have realms here, and it's a good bet that these areas are at least mildly evil-aligned and otherwise function as divinely morphic locales.

Note that a campaign that includes both the Great Wheel and the Faerûnian Cosmology poses a few problems. For example, there are several deities, such as Bahamut, Corellon Larethian, and Lolth, that are present in both cosmologies. You can assume that such deities have analogs that exist in both cosmologies simultaneously, or you can assume that the deities split their time between the two cosmologies, traveling between them via the Plane of Shadow.

**Outer Planes:** The FORGOTTEN REALMS Outer Planes are divinely morphic, as are the Outer Planes described in the *Manual of the Planes*. At present, their other planar traits are unrevealed, but one can make some educated guesses about them just based on which gods dwell on each plane.

**The Abyss:** Mildly chaos and evil aligned. The Abyss of the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology is nearly identical to the Abyss described in the *Manual of the Planes*, except that the only planar link is the Astral branch to Toril.

**Arvandor:** Mildly chaos and good aligned. This plane is similar to the first layer of Arborea.

**The Barrens of Doom and Despair:** Mildly law and evil aligned. This plane is similar to Gehenna, but without the River Styx.

**Brightwater:** Mildly good aligned; similar to the first layer of Arborea, but less so than Arvandor.

**Cynosure:** A demiplane that serves as a meeting place for the gods. As neutral ground, Cynosure has no alignment or energy traits. Although it is a demiplane and of finite size, any god can travel there. When that god leaves, however, the deity must return to the plane from whence he or she came.

**Demonweb Pits:** Mildly chaos and evil aligned. The Demonweb Pits are similar to the description in the *Manual of the Planes*, except that this is a separate plane, not a location on the Abyss.

## How do I use the Manual of the Planes with the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting?

**Dragon Eyrie:** Mixed alignment and elemental traits. The plane's prevailing traits undoubtedly vary depending on which god's realm you happen to be in.

**Dwarfhome:** Mildly law and good aligned. The plane is similar to Eracknor, which is part of Celestia, but Dwarfhome is a plane unto itself.

**Dweomerheart:** No alignment traits, mixed magic traits.

**The Fugue Plane:** A demiplane that serves as a collection point for the souls of the dead. Like Cynosure, the Fugue Plane is neutral ground and has no alignment or energy traits. (The personal realms of Jergal and Kelemvor probably have alignment traits appropriate for these gods.) Although it is a demiplane and of finite size, the souls of the dead can travel there from anywhere in the cosmology.

**Fury's Heart:** Mildly chaos and evil aligned. The plane is similar to both Orthrys and Cathrys (both layers of Carceri), but without the River Styx.

**Gates of the Moon:** Mildly chaos aligned.

**The Golden Hills:** Mildly good aligned; similar to the Golden Hills region of Dothion (part of Bytopia), but a plane in its own right.

**Green Fields:** Mildly good aligned; somewhat similar to Venya (a layer of Celestia).

**Hammergrim:** Mildly law and evil aligned; similar to Dwarfhome, but foul and evil.

**Heliopolis:** Mixed alignment traits and mixed elemental traits. The plane's prevailing traits undoubtedly vary depending on which god's realm you happen to be in.

**House of Knowledge:** Mildly neutral aligned with no energy traits; similar to the Outlands.

**House of Nature:** Mildly neutral aligned with no energy traits; similar to the Beastlands, but without the River Oceanus.


**House of the Triad:** Mildly law aligned; similar to the first layer of Ysgard, but a plane in its own right and with a lawful bent.

**Nishrek:** Mildly chaos and evil aligned. Nishrek is similar to the first layer of Ysgard, but dangerous and evil.

**The Nine Hells (Baator):** Mildly law and evil aligned. The Hells of the FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology is nearly identical to those described in the *Manual of the Planes*, except that the only planar link is the Astral branch to Toril.

**The Supreme Throne:** Mildly chaos and evil aligned; similar to a closed cavity on Agathon (a layer of Pandemonium), but a plane in its own right.

**Warrior's Rest:** Mildly chaos aligned; similar to the first layer of Ysgard, but a plane in its own right and with a chaotic bent.

**Inner Planes:** FORGOTTEN REALMS cosmology's Inner Planes are divinely morphic, just as the Outer Planes are. The only planar links are the Astral branches leading to Toril. They are otherwise similar to the Inner Planes described in the *Manual of the Planes*. 



by John Four

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# Bluffing for the DM

**B**luffing is a familiar term to D&D players. It describes a skill that you can employ that, according to the *Player's Handbook*, utilizes acting, conning, fast talking, and misleading body language to make an untruth seem plausible. But for the DM, bluff isn't merely a skill that encompasses lying. The DM often uses bluffing in a larger sense, as a means of providing her players with an unexpected scenario. Imagine a campaign where players know that their DM never bluffs and every situation is exactly as it appears to be. It would pale in comparison to an unpredictable game where seemingly tough foes could actually be weaklings in disguise and any challenge could be a trick.

To run a bluffing scenario successfully, the DM must do double duty—both the DM's behavior and that of the NPCs she is portraying can make or break the bluff. This article discusses how your behavior can prevent players from using metagame thinking to see through your bluff and offers tactics your NPCs can employ to ensure that the players won't even think of making a Sense Motive check!

## Setting up a Bluffing Scenario

The number of creative bluffing scenarios you come up with is limited only by your imagination. However, keep in mind that the more often you run these types of scenarios, the less impact they will have. A good bluffing scenario contains the following four elements.

1. **Believability:** A good bluffing scenario is believable to the players and their characters. Keep an eye out for anything that could tip the players off

to the bluff or strain their sense of belief. The bluff must be real according to the game world, the situation, and the game rules.

2. **Doubt:** A good bluffing scenario casts a shadow over logic and PC confidence. Even if the PCs know their opponent might be bluffing them, there must be enough doubt so that they believe the bluff could be real.

## 5 Ways to Fill the PCs with Doubt

1. Both you and the NPC you are portraying remain relaxed and confident.
2. Present misleading information. A foe points a wand, which is marked "finger of death" in elven runes, to his hostage's head. What the players don't know is that the foe inscribed those fake runes himself the previous night.
3. Shift the PCs' focus from whether the bluff is real or not to the consequences of the PCs making the wrong decision.
4. Distract and confuse the PCs. For example, the bluffer might start a philosophical argument at an inopportune time.
5. Give the players supporting clues by having the bluffer point out any apparent evidence that authenticates his deception.

3. **Bad consequences:** A good bluffing scenario includes serious consequences for the PCs. The greater the consequences, the greater the PCs' (and the players') hesitation and reluctance to call the bluff.

4. **Difficult choices:** A good bluffing scenario forces the PCs to decide between difficult choices, usually no more than two. For instance, the PCs must either call an NPC's bluff and risk losing everything or back down and get revenge another day. A good technique here is to create an immediate deadline. This puts pressure on the characters to make a hasty decision and removes the possibility of further investigation for evidence of a bluff. For instance, a bluffing NPC might deliver an ultimatum: "Hand over the artifact now or I'll disintegrate your comrade."

## Thought Control

Metagame thinking—when your players base their decisions and actions on their own logic rather than that of their characters—can end a planned bluffing scenario before it begins. When you are running a bluffing scenario, it is important that you, as the DM, bluff the players as well as their characters. Many sources claim that the best gamblers learn their opponent's "tells," which are subconscious behaviors that reveal when the opponent is lying or nervous.

Also, keep in mind that you are facing more than one player. Your job is to keep all the players involved and thinking about the in-game situation, rather than metagame aspects like, "Is the DM bluffing?" When a player's attention starts to wander, pull her back into the game by directing an NPC's action or question at her.

## Back up your Bluff

You've set up the bluffing scenario successfully, and so far your players don't seem wary or suspicious. It is now time



### 10 Consequences PCs Might Risk If they Incorrectly Call a Bluff

1. Harm or death to a party member, family member, or ally
2. Harm or death to a hostage
3. Magic items or other important belongings destroyed
4. Tainted reputations
5. Financial ruin
6. The anger of a particular deity
7. Barred from entering a region
8. Ostracized from family or guild
9. Banishment to another plane
10. Long-term damage to the region, such as economic recession or forest decimation

### 10 Tells for the DM to Avoid

1. Hands covering or hovering over mouth
2. Not meeting players' eyes
3. Clenched fists or other tense behavior
4. Sudden frowning or raised eyebrow
5. Glancing at or opening the *Monster Manual*
6. Sudden relaxation or exhalation
7. Big grin or sneaky smirk
8. Talking louder or faster than normal
9. Over-anticipation or eager behavior
10. Rolling dice

### Bluffing Categories The Hopeless Bluff:

This is the most challenging type of bluff for a DM to pull off, but it's also the most fun. In a hopeless bluff situation, the PCs could easily overcome their opponent, but the DM creates a situation that causes the PCs to doubt the circumstances and themselves. In this type of situation, you must find a plausible way to convince the characters not to simply attack and overcome their foe through greater strength and ability.

**The Partial Bluff:** In a partial bluff scenario, the bluffing NPC stands to gain regardless of the choice the PCs make. However, one choice clearly has the greatest benefits, so the NPC attempts to make the characters opt for that particular choice.

**The Reverse Bluff:** In a reverse bluff scenario, a strong foe tricks the weaker PCs into doing something the characters normally wouldn't, such as attacking when they should flee. The foe often does this by acting weaker and more vulnerable than she truly is or by pretending to make a significant mistake.

for the PCs and the bluffing NPC to have their final encounter. One Sense Motive check against the NPC could foil all your hard work, so you want to avoid giving your players any reason to do so. Besides not giving "tells" to your players, your NPC must do the same. The following tips can increase the likelihood that your NPC's bluff will succeed.

- **Bluffing can be affected by initiative order.** Often, the person who goes first has more power. For example, the first person to act won't seem to be merely reacting to others' actions as a gambit to escape or gain advantage. A bluffing NPC in combat should always attempt to act first.

- **Let the fooled go first.** As an exception to the previous tip, if you know one of the PCs believes the NPC's bluff, let him go first—he might convince others that the bluff is true. Hold an NPC's actions until after a believer's turn.

- **Support the bluff early in the game.** When possible, try to feed players information that will seemingly support an NPC's bluff when it occurs.

- **Be confident.** Appear to be well informed, convincing, and plausible when roleplaying a bluffing NPC.

- **Don't be overconfident.** Acting confident is one thing, being overconfident could signal that something is amiss and give the players time to change their minds on how to proceed.

- **Citing specific facts can lend a bluff credibility.** An NPC that speaks in vague terms can seem uncertain and sneaky, so be specific. Draw attention to details that support the NPC's bluff, or use

obscure language and jargon to befuddle and confuse the PCs. For instance, a team of rogues have tricked a small village into believing that the rogues know magic that will finally rid the area of vampires. To convince the villagers of their expertise, the rogues have made up jargon, which in actuality is nothing more than meaningless words. (For more information on using coded types of language, read "If you Know What I Mean" from *DRAGON* #290.)

- **Try to convince the leader or alpha player in your group.** His opinion will greatly influence how the others regard your bluff.

### When your Bluff is Called

The NPC has either fled, been imprisoned, or is dead, and your players are smug about not falling for your trick. Sometimes, a failed bluff can feel like a personal failure, but it's important that you don't get mad or feel the need to get revenge.

The truth is, you're supposed to lose. If every bluff worked, then your campaigns would all start like this: "The villain approaches your table at the inn and says 'You are doomed to fail against my genius, quit now.'" The PCs believe her and call it quits: end of campaign.

Keep in mind that unlike Poker, D&D is not a DM (dealer) versus the players game. Instead, everyone wins if you manage to entertain, shock, and challenge your players with some clever roleplaying.

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# SILICON SORCERY

by Johnny L. Wilson

## CASTLE BUILDING 101

**S**tronghold is the newest entry in an impressive field, castle-building simulations, which includes games such as *Castles* and *Castles II: Siege & Conquest* (Interplay) and *Lord of the Realms* and *Lord of the Realms II* (Impressions). These games allow you to experiment with castle design, offering you a chance to learn interactively. If your castles or dungeons consist of simple arrangements of connected rooms with no coherent relationships or functionality, learning something about medieval life, medieval economics, and the rationale behind the design of a castle can help your game.

*Stronghold* does not offer historically accurate castle design. In fact, some of the game mechanics in *Stronghold* work against certain historical principles. However, *Stronghold* works well on two levels. It is two games in one: one for would-be generals and one for would-be seneschals. Most gamers prefer the military campaign—21 scenarios where one builds or rebuilds a castle using the time-honored tactics of siege warfare while facing waves of enemies. The other game option is the economic campaign. This is more like a medieval version of *SimCity*. There is nothing frenetic about this game option; one simply starts with a small keep and manages a medieval settlement until it can support a full-blown castle. There are no military threats in this campaign, just economic goals tied to population and production; the victory conditions for each mission require more complex management.

### Stronghold Lessons

*Stronghold* teaches many true-to-history lessons on castle building.

1. It all begins with a keep. Whether a sprawling complex or a compact wooden fort, each castle had one central tower, citadel, or building that was designed for a last-ditch defense. DMs should plan the keep as the location where the toughest foes make their most desperate stand. The evil alchemist should have his laboratory in the keep. The swashbuckling villain should be able to hold the top of the keep's staircase.

2. Every structure has a purpose. Whether infiltrated, besieged, or explored as ruins, castles are more interesting and offer a sense of verisimilitude within the adventure if traps, encounters, and treasures make sense within the proper context. When the sacred artifact is found in the chapel, the masterwork sword is found in the armory, and the horse's magic barding found in the stable, it feels like the adventure takes place in a living world rather than a haphazard collection of locations.

3. Every location needs a rationale. Castles existed to block invasions, control local populations, and protect valuable holdings. DMs need to consider why a castle exists in a certain locale and what its function is. In this way, proper castle design can become a linchpin for the campaign whether the castle becomes a bottleneck, obstacle, fertile ground for mysteries and intrigue, or merely the adventuring party's home base.



**Smells Like Victory:** *Stronghold*'s economic campaign lets players win by reaching population and production goals. Here, the seneschal produced 10 bows and 10 swords for his liege lord.

### Stronghold No-Nos

In a few areas, *Stronghold* has chosen exciting gameplay over historical accuracy. That's a fine choice, but aspiring castle architects should know the differences.

1. Hilltop keeps are rare. Although logic supports placing the fortress where one would expect to make a



**Popularity Breeds Contempt:** In one of the individual combat scenarios, this lord was popular, but unready to defend his castle when the enemy besieged it.



stand on higher ground, the mechanics of *Stronghold* work against this basic strategy. Stockpiles must be adjacent to the keep, and they must be contiguous with the original platform or extensions of that platform. Rarely does a hilltop keep allow sufficient room for multiple stockpile platforms. Placing a D&D keep on higher ground allows for more use of rules for cover and provides easier avenues of attack on the surrounding terrain.

2. **Mine the gap.** More castle sieges were won throughout history via mining or subterfuge than attacking. This often transpired by undermining the castle's wall structures and exploding them with a petard (a black powder bomb focused on a weak spot) or tunneling underneath a section of wall or corner of the keep and using flaming hog corpses to burn down the wooden framing so that the tunneling would collapse and bring down a portion of the wall with it. Of course, there is always the sneak attack via garderobe option. DMs should reward parties who avoid the frontal attack on a castle.

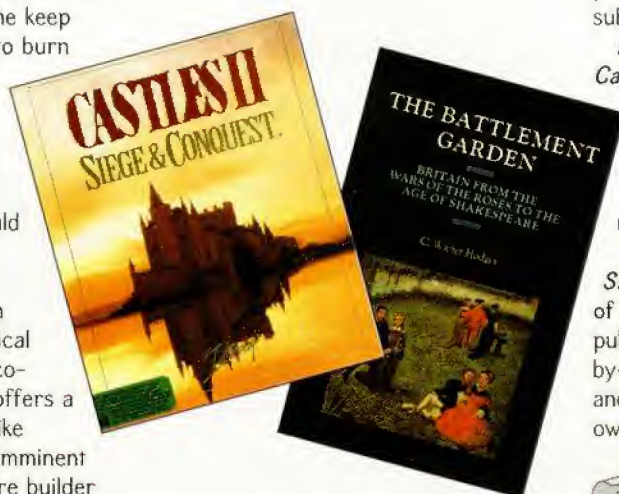
3. **Military is secondary.** In an effort to do the opposite of typical real-time strategy games, the economic campaign in *Stronghold* offers a false security to the player. Unlike *Majesty* or *Castles*, there is no imminent threat facing the castle or empire builder within the early scenarios. You concentrate on economic food chains and victory conditions. DMs should remember that the purpose of a castle is to defend a road, a boundary, or a territory with economic advantage. Someone will always attempt to remove the defense to gain an advantage (strategic or economic). Instead of beginning a campaign with a kidnapping or missing artifact, a campaign could be centered on a decaying kingdom that is losing its castles one by one.

4. **Dead ground is overly limited.** The economic exigencies of *Stronghold* make it difficult to architect one vital defense from medieval warfare, the so-called "dead grounds." The maps are limited and the scarcity of land makes it difficult to reserve dead ground, areas of clear land, ditches, and moats that allow the defenders to fire at would-be attackers with impunity. In D&D, having such dead ground can be an invaluable opportunity to force attackers to resort to magic or subterfuge in order to avoid

the horrendous casualty counts of an ill-advised frontal assault.

### Closing the Drawbridge

*Stronghold* offers players a lush and colorful version of the classic castle-building game. It is an intriguing experience for both empire builders and generals. For DMs, it can provide interesting layouts for medieval villages, towns, and castles—simply take screenshots of interesting maps and work them into your game. Printing a screen to hard disk can create a variety of town schematics for those nights when the adventuring party seems determined to visit locales you haven't quite fleshed out.



### Castle-Building Resources

*Castles and Castles 2: Siege & Conquest* (Interplay Productions): As the progenitor of castle-building sims, these programs just got better. The multimedia CD-ROM for *Castles* is one of the few legitimate uses of film footage in a game product.

*Lords of the Realm and Lords of the Realm II* (Impressions/Sierra): These offer a strategy game as the main course with castle-building as dessert. The ability to use historical castle designs is both expedient and educational.

*Majesty* (Hasbro): In *Majesty*, players must construct the right elements for their medieval villages and townships within certain logistical constraints, while trying to explore the maps and solve the quests and missions at the same time.

*Siege of Avalon* (Digital Tome): Although this is an online roleplaying game, the castle was probably the best-designed layout in any computer game.

Joseph and Francis Gies. *Life in a Medieval Castle* (Harper & Row): Primarily based on Cheptow Castle, this book offers amazing insights.

*Life in a Medieval City* (Harper & Row): Anyone who wants to create realistic intrigue in a medieval city should texture it with the detail found in this classic work.


C. Walter Hodges. *The Battlement Garden* (Houghton Mifflin): Beautifully illustrated and focusing on the period around the War of the Roses, *The Battlement Garden* is a marvelous introduction to medieval life.

David MacAuley. *Castles* (Houghton Mifflin): Attractive diagrams and simple prose make this a quick resource on the subject of castle construction.

Arnold Taylor. *Studies in Castles and Castle-Building* (Hambleton Press): This is a serious textbook on the theory and practical aspects of castle construction.

But for D&D castle building, there's no substitute for:

Matt Forbeck and David Noonan.

*Stronghold Builder's Guidebook* (Wizards of the Coast) coming in March, 2002: This publication walks players and DMs step-by-step through the decision processes and rules considerations for building one's own castle in a D&D campaign. 

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